



PlayStation®2

PlayStation®Portable

PLAYSTATION®3

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

JULY ISSUE 2009
100% Australian Content



FINAL VERDICT!

HOSTBUSTERS

Crossing the streams with Bill Murray & co.!

SUPER-SHOWDOWN!

FREAKSHOW

Reviewed: Prototype and PS3-
exclusive inFamous square off!

FIRST PLAY!

FIFA 10

Soccer with balls!

HANDS-ON!

SEX ON WHEELS

Need for Speed SHIFT: forget
what you think you know!

EXPOSED!

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

How Rockstar won the West, and
why it's bigger and better than GTAIV!
EXCLUSIVE SCREENS!
NEW DETAILS!



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS: TONY HAWK AND RICKY PONTING SPEAK!

PLUS!
46

PAGES OF
ESSENTIAL REVIEWS
AND UPDATES!

- Bionic Commando
- Ashes Cricket 2009
- Rock Band Unplugged
- Terminator Salvation
- Tony Hawk RIDE
- Dead Rising 2 • WET
- Brütal Legend • The Saboteur • Mafia II
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PLAYSTATION 3



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BEING A HERO IS OPTIONAL



Violence

Empire City is burning. Chaos roams the streets. The city needs a hero, what they have is you. Will you save what's left or destroy it all? **inFAMOUS** in stores now.



PLAYSTATION 3

IT'S THE REASON SOME SUPERHEROES WEAR A MASK.

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GAMESPOT AU

"Every so often, a game comes out of nowhere and zaps you. inFamous is such a game."

www.gamespot.com



"inFamous is one of the best offerings on the PlayStation 3 to date"

9.2/10





INFAMOUS

Reviewed – King Cole in this season's most 'shocking' action title. Page 68

INSIDER

- 10 News**
All the latest info!
- 12 Screenshot**
Plus Separated at Birth!
- 13 Where To Now?**
What now for Duke Nukem?
- 14 Top Ten**
Comic-book games!
- 16 Around the World**
What's making headlines?
- 17 Release Schedule**
Plus Aussie charts!
- 18 Opinion**
Sound off!!

"This is so much larger than GTA IV it isn't funny"

Rockstar spokesperson

COVER STORY

48 RED DEAD REDEMPTION

GTA bundles up its wagons and heads West

ON THE COVER



34 NFS: SHIFT

We go for a spin in EA's new racer

38 FIFA 10

The beautiful game!

44 MAFIA II

1940s gangsters wise up!

68 SUPERPOWER

infamous and Prototype go head-to-head!

76 TERMINATOR

Fight the future!



BRÜTAL LEGEND

The tenacious Jack Black goes horns up in this cracking romp through the musical darkside. Are you ready to rock? Page 58



PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

PREVIEWED

30 DEAD RISING 2

In-depth first look at the zombie masses taking over the world, one casino at a time!

34 NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

A new direction for the veteran racing series – but is it the right way?

36 THE SABOTEUR

Sneak 'em up action during World War II!

40 ROGUE WARRIOR

Signed SEALed and delivered!

42 DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

BioWare's fantastical PS3 debut!

43 WET

First impressions of espionage antics!

43 DARK VOID

Take to the skies, Rocketeer-style, in Capcom's jet pack shooter.

44 MAFIA II

Out-master the Godfather in 2K's period game!

45 KING OF FIGHTERS: XII

The 2D fighter gets overhauled!

REGULARS

10 INsider

News, comedy and opinion

22 INbox

Your letters answered

30 INcoming

Previews of future titles

67 INreview

Verdicts for the latest games

84 INtermission

Blu-ray, DVD, cinema

88 INternet

PSN news, online reviews

90 INsight

Essential tips & tricks

92 INdex

Your ultimate buyer's guide

96 INfamous

Classics unearthed!

45 FIGHT NIGHT: ROUND 4

It's time to lace up!

46 RB: UNPLUGGED

The PSP gets in on the rythm action!

47 FATE: UNLIMITED CODES

A new fighter for the PSP!

47 TEKKEN 6

Iron Fist returns on the Portable!



REVIEWED

68 INFAMOUS

72 PROTOTYPE

76 TERMINATOR: SALVATION

78 GHOSTBUSTERS

80 BIONIC COMMANDO

81 FUEL

82 DAMNATION

83 VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

Meet the latest action hero!

THE SABOTEUR 36



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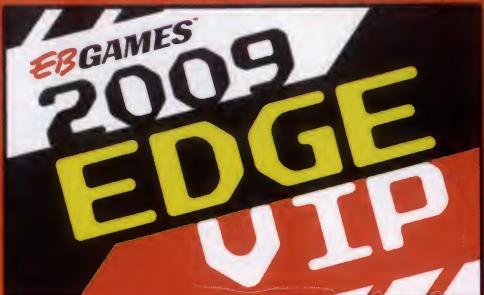
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I'd be lying if I said I flat-out hate retro revivals. That'd be overly melodramatic, plus it leaves no room for things I actually do hate. Like CityRail transit officers who mill around in groups of eight making women who've forgotten to update their weekly tickets cry. Or quiche.

I am fairly cautious of them though. Games, movies or otherwise – they rarely end up worth the effort. I loved *The Warriors* on PS2 even though I'm not attached to the film, and I warmed to *Die Hard 4.0* on account of part of me wishing I could have John McClane as one of those cool uncles you only see at weddings. For the most part though, they worry me slightly.

It's with that scepticism I approached *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*. I knew that it probably didn't need to be THAT good for me to enjoy it. Activision chose to offload it rather than keep it after the merger with Vivendi so it's likely a bit disappointing, I figured. I was wrong. And not for the first time.

As soon as I'm done here I'll be playing *Ghostbusters* again. I'm addicted. As an absolute sucker for presentation, the attention to detail of *Ghostbusters* has me hooked through the cheek. The relegation of all the usual player info to visual displays on the Proton Pack, the Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis script, the original actors' voices and likenesses, the faithfully recreated special effects – *Ghostbusters* is one of the most credible movie-cum-games I've seen.

To the guys at Terminal Reality, have you seen *Commando*?

LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** GHOSTBUSTERS **WANTING:** RED DEAD REDEMPTION

OPS ON: '80s REVIVALS



STEPHANIE GOH

E.T. was a heart-touching epic, and the ride through the moonlit sky would definitely be a fan-favourite scene to recreate. Just leave the guns in, okay?

PSN: TBA

Playing: Ghostbusters
Wanting: Red Dead
Redemption



PAUL TAYLOR

Uncle Buck channelling the spirit of the late great John Candy, set during and after the events of the movie. Comedy would ensue with visual gags courtesy of Buck's Mercury Marquis.

PSN: paulgusta
Playing: Mvc2
Wanting: Blur



JAMES COTTEE

I'd like to get my guerrilla warfare funk on with a ragtag band of teenage rebels who single-handedly repel a commie invasion. The time is ripe for *Red Dawn* on PS3. Wolverines!

PSN: DrWho3987
Playing: inFamous
Wanting: Batman: AA



JAMES ELLIS

The further adventures of *The Goonies*, but done by Rockstar. Take control of an older Chunk who's truffle shuffle is now strong enough to open the gates of Hell. Cue adventure.

PSN: gtfastr49
Playing: UFC 2009
Wanting: Brütal Legend

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Congratulations Monique & Nigel! :: Chico
Lips :: Dom :: Skells :: The Fox And Crow
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Gaming's latest and greatest

BLUR

Renowned development team jumps on board the PS3



DJ HERO

Scratch-tacula isn't a real word. We made it up...

Following on from the super-mega barnstorming success of *Guitar Hero*, Activision will release *DJ Hero*, replete with turntable, cross-fader, effects dial, 'Euphoria' button (equivalent of star power) and the usual array of d-pad and control buttons. This could be the Next Big Thing, given everyone's love of plastic peripherals. Anyway, for now, check out the confirmed set list.

"Feel Good Inc." (Gorillaz) vs "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" (Marvin Gaye)

"Jayou" (Jurassic 5) vs "Rockit" (Herbie Hancock)

"Bustin' Loose" (Chuck Brown) vs "Time of the Season" (The Zombies, DJ Shadow Mix)

"All Apologies" (Nirvana) vs "Give It to Me Baby" (Rick James, DJ Shadow Mix)

"Let's Dance" (David Bowie) vs "Jack of Spades" (KRS One, DJ Shadow Mix)

"Shout" (Tears for Fears) vs "Pjanoo" (Eric Prydz)

A new racing game by Bizarre Creations, the team previously behind the Xbox racing series *Project Gotham Racing*, is set to make its way to the PS3. Using real-world cars and locations under an artistic licence, it also blends powerups into the equation - so while you're barreling down a street in Tokyo, LA or San Francisco, don't expect the layout to be exactly as it is on a map. Plus, the powerups won't have you firing rockets off into the distance - think shields, nitro boosts and on-the-fly repairs that Bizarre promise will make a real difference to the final race result. The hook, though, is that the racing scene's all tied together by a social network, similar to Facebook, where the points and cash you accrue are determined by the amount of fans you woo due to your racing skills. We can also expect four-player splitscreen. It's about time.





18 Angry Sackboy

He may be cute and adorable when he's happy, but when he's upset he's a grumpy shit. Turn over and find out why, if you dare.



22 Inbox

Your words on our words, and our words on yours. It's like *The Lion King*, circle of life, but without the elephant graveyard.



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Ghost-busters

Da-nah na nuh na nuh...



Red Dead Redemption

We haven't stopped muttering cowboy slang!



Red Faction Multiplayer

Local matches rock. Believe it



Monte Carlo

One of the best places ever to host a convention, until...



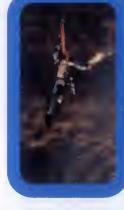
Jetlag

The inevitable, cruel downside to jetsetting



Waiting for DLC

GTA IV, Fallout 3 – the delay's a killer



Damnation

A perfect example of what not to play

IN SHORT...



A public service announcement, direct from the desk of the Hon. Nicola Roxon MP, says that 16 percent of Australians aged 20-29 had reported using ice. Not cool. You can't play games when you're dead.



New footage of the next game from Team Ico, the mob responsible for PS2 gems *ICO* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, has leaked on the net. At this stage it's called *Project TRICO*.



Ratchet & Clank themed level on LittleBigPlanet? Rumours say yes, and it could be bigger than the *Metal Gear Solid* level. Watch this space. Or somewhere else in the mag. We'll let you know somehow.

SCREENTEST

UNCHARTED

Between a rock
and a hard-arse

The Director
Steven Spielberg

The Plot

As everyman/one-man-war-machine Nathan Drake, you partner up with lovable rogue/lecherous old sleazebag Victor 'Sully' Sullivan and accessible piece of love interest fluff Elena Fisher to find a treasure of unimaginable value – El Dorado's famed gold statue.

After suddenly acquiring the clambering skills of an Olympic athlete, and the murderin' skills of a young John Rambo, Drake ploughs his way through literally hundreds of South East Asian pirates (the modern, kidnapping and raping kind), before uncovering a curse that unleashes a horde of Zombies... Nazi Zombies... upon Drake's gang and the pirates he somehow didn't find time to kill.

The Pitch

Indiana Jones meets Rambo meets Cliffhanger meets Lost in a sordid murderous romp in the jungle.

Green Light or Development Hell?

For some reason we want this movie to feature the kind of set-from-hell related shenanigans seen in movies such as *Apocalypse Now*. We want the actor playing Drake to turn up 30 kilos overweight, Sully to be in the midst of a month long, drug induced psychotic episode that causes him to start fellating cacti, and Director Steven Spielberg to get leprosy and swine flu at the exact same time.

Despite all these on-set difficulties, and budgeting problems, however, we expect the movie to make it to the cutting room on schedule and become the barnstorming summer blockbuster hit we all know it can become.

So yes, *Uncharted* will be green lit.

Best Line:

Nathan Drake: "Sully, remember that barmaid you nailed in Lima? She was a Barman..."

The Cast:

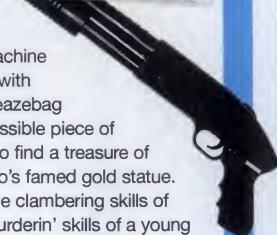
Nathan Fillion is everyman Nathan Drake

Bill Murray is laid back aging lothario Sully

Kristen Bell is the super hot girl next door who is hot

Javier Bardem is the evil Spanish dude – adios asshole

Jeremy Irons is the annoying guy who accosts Sully



VICTORY!

FALLING FOR YOU

Bethesda has announced the much-lauded *Fallout 3* downloadable content, previously exclusive to Xbox 360, will be made available for PS3.

Operation: Anchorage will be released to PS3 gamers via the PlayStation Network in late June, followed by the release of *The Pitt* and *Broken Steel* four to six weeks apart. Exact release dates are pending.

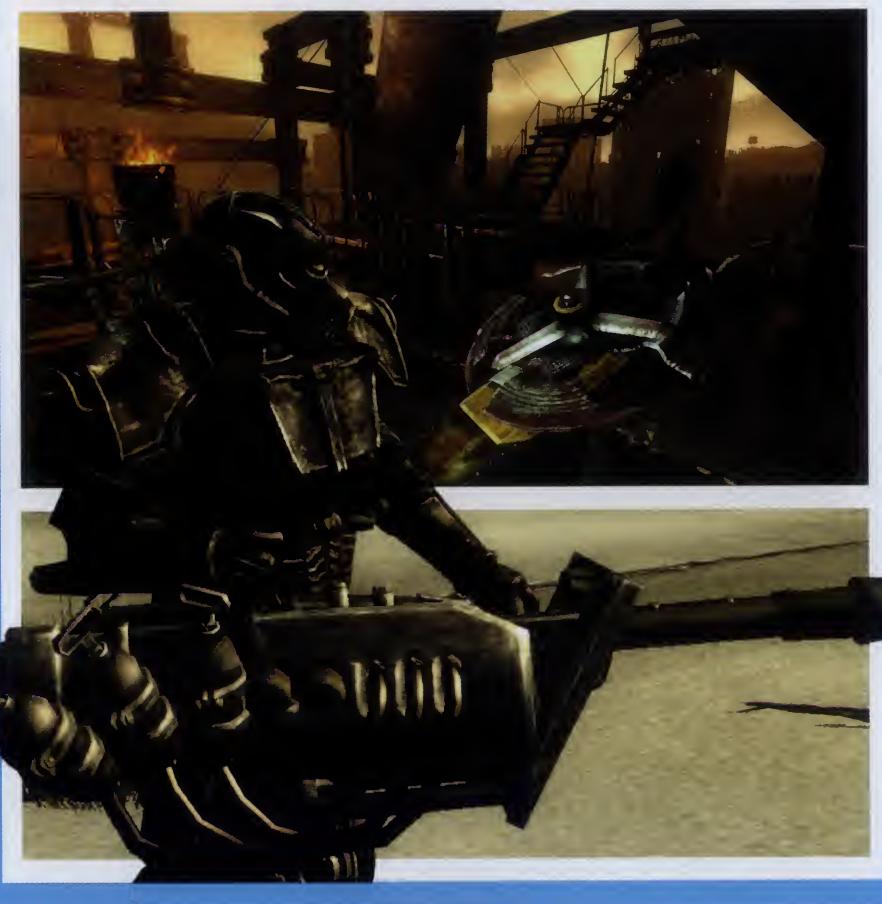
A new update will be released shortly that will allow users to download and play the new DLC.

Even better, Bethesda has also announced two new DLC packs bound for all platforms, PS3 included. *Point Lookout* will give gamers a

massive new swampland area to explore, which will be filled with new quests and content, and *Motherlode Zeta* will allow players to experience an alien abduction first hand. Both of these will be released after the first three packs have hit PS3, but Bethesda has not stipulated any dates.

For those who can wait, a *Fallout 3 Game of the Year* edition will be available in October. It will include the original game plus all five add-ons.

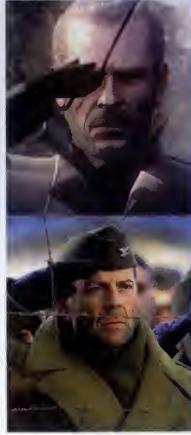
Now all we need is for Rockstar to unleash *GTA: The Lost & Damned* on us and we'll be immune from any DLC-related barbs slung by even the loudest of blowhards.



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SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 5 Yippy-ki-yay Big Boss – Bruce Willis

Okay, so it certainly helps that they're both striking the same pose here – but can't you see the similarities? Come on! Get rid of the eye-patch and you're most of the way there! That's Big Boss from *Metal Gear Solid 4*, by the way. If we spoiled anything for you, sorry – you should've already finished it.

**EXPLAIN
YOURSELF**

If Public Service

Announcements are to be believed, the single greatest threat we face as a society is unhealthy foods, laden with trans fats and salt. As Diet Warrior Duke Nukem, you're on a mission to make food healthy — to the EXTREME!

**FAT HAZARD:
THE RETURN
OF DUKE
NUKEM****HOW
WILL IT
PLAY?**

A Metal Gear-style third-person perspective would best fit a shooting romp through convoluted food-packing plants and battery farms, perhaps with first-person close-ups for when you drive meat workers into their own grinders for some ironic schadenfreude.

**THE
STORY**

Evil corporate executives are trying to make money by pushing junk food on kids! Your quest to defeat their avarice will take you around the world, destroying food processing plants, high-density feed lots, advertising firms, and finally the headquarters of the evil corporation behind it all!

PROBABILITY

A grant or two is all it would take. Considering how our government will blow millions on anything to get a headline, it's more likely than you think.

**EXPLAIN
YOURSELF**

All men are pigs! Especially footballers that lure groupies pious, innocent girls back to their hotel rooms for rowdy group sex. As Equality Warrior Duke Nukem, your mission is to destroy the harmful heteronormative stereotypes engrained in our culture... to the EXTREME!

**THE
STORY**

Evil corporate executives are trying to make money by brainwashing women into thinking they need to be physically attractive. Your quest will take you from the depths of the perfume mines to the heights of the Milan catwalks, blasting a swathe right through to the HQ of the evil corporation behind it all!

**DUKE NUKEM'S
SEX MISSION****HOW
WILL IT
PLAY?**

While it will play like a normal first-person shooter, Duke will deliver an entirely new range of thoughtful, respectful catch-phrases in his husky, commanding voice — phrases like: "I respect your personal space, baby" and "Gender roles are but patriarchal stereotypes, doll face."

PROBABILITY

Hell, Nintendo actually made Super Princess Peach. Anything's possible...

WHERE TO NOW?

The long-delayed first-person shooter *Duke Nukem Forever* has been cancelled. Some say the demise of this particular project spells doom for all action heroes, but we beg to differ. Even in this changing world, we reckon there are plenty of market niches where a figure of Duke Nukem's stature can live, thrive and survive...

**EXPLAIN
YOURSELF**

Don't let that plummeting thermometer fool you. Minute atmospheric proportions of an inert gas vital to all life on Earth is raising global temperatures — to the EXTREME! As Climate Warrior Duke Nukem, you're on a mission to destroy all pollution.

**THE
STORY**

Evil corporate executives are trying to make money by making the planet they themselves live on uninhabitable! Your quest to thwart their naked greed will take you around the world, destroying oil rigs, coal-fired power plants, and dishwasher factories, before finally trashing the HQ of the evil corporation behind it all!

**DUKE NUKEM:
CARBON
CREDITOR****HOW
WILL IT
PLAY?**

To purge the world with optimal efficiency, you'll carpool with other action heroes in your hybrid-powered battle tank. To help in choosing which industries to spare and which to raze, you'll receive helpful advice over the codec from Al Gore, inventor of the Internet.

**PROBABILITY**

If the developers promise to slim down Big Al's character model so that only a few of his chins are showing, the millionaire environmental consultant may well fund it himself!

**EXPLAIN
YOURSELF**

Any legal expert will tell you that animals are more entitled to health and happiness than mere humans. And when it comes to blocking new residential, industrial, or commercial development, only Animal Rights Warrior Duke Nukem can elevate society to a more enlightened stance — to the EXTREME!

**THE
STORY**

Evil corporate executives are trying to make money by providing jobs, land, furs, and cosmetics to greedy, selfish humans. Your quest to restore the natural order will take you around the world, burning wasteful sprawl and freeing God's chosen creatures.

**DUKE NUKEM:
FURRY FURY****HOW
WILL IT
PLAY?**

As he frees more and more innocent creatures from human servitude, the Duke's posse will grow throughout each level, just like in *Pikmin*. Each new species will bring new biting and clawing attacks, and new means of making those horrible humans pay.

PROBABILITY

For a lot of people, human interaction is just too hard — they'd rather hang with cats and dogs. They already think of (other) people as the devil, and would love the chance to blow them away, even if only allegorically.

TOP 10 COMICS THAT SHOULD BE MADE INTO GAMES (ASIDE FROM DEADPOOL)

Great news, comics fans: the word on the street is that Raven Software is going to make a true-to-the-comics video game starring the merc with a mouth, Deadpool. Top stuff! But we can think of some other cult hits that could rule on the PS3.

ABC WARRIORS

They were designed to be the ultimate soldiers, impervious to any atomic, bacteriological, or chemical poisons – but now Hammerstein and his team have gone rogue! With their radically differing abilities, these metal miscreants would be suited to an ensemble game where you swap between them as needed.



EMPOWERED

She has the potential to be the world's greatest super-hero, but is hamstrung by her pitifully low self-esteem. Also, she loses her powers whenever

her spandex gets ripped – which is often. In case you haven't guessed, this one's a comedy. The freakish villains, like Willy Pete, could certainly make for some memorable boss battles.



VIZ

That game they made for the Commodore in the '80s doesn't count. Only the power of the PS3 can truly realise the freakish misadventures of Buster Gonad, Johnny Fartpants, Sid the Sexist, Special Weapons And No Tactics, and of course the Vibrating Bum-Faced Goats. A mini-game bonanza, wethinks.



HELLBLAZER

An elite, SAS-style counterterrorist force, the Hellblazing organisation has a secret weapon in their battles with the undead – the vampire Alucard. But will his blazing automatics be enough to hold back an invasion of Nazi werewolves? Having already spawned two series of video nasties, Hellblazing would make a formidable DMC clone.



TANK GIRL

Banish from your mind that dreadful '90s movie, the comics were radically different. For one thing, they were piss-funny; satirical romps set in a dystopian future Australia with Paul Hogan as our doddering, incontinent president. So long as they got Hewlett and Martin back on board, this one could be a ripper.



THE QUESTION

Grassroots support is swelling for The Question; he's the character Alan Moore ripped off when he invented Rorschach. From the mind of Spider-Man co-creator Steve Ditko, he's a hard-boiled detective with a special mask that makes it look like he has no face. Lots of political arguments, biff, and murder – great stuff.

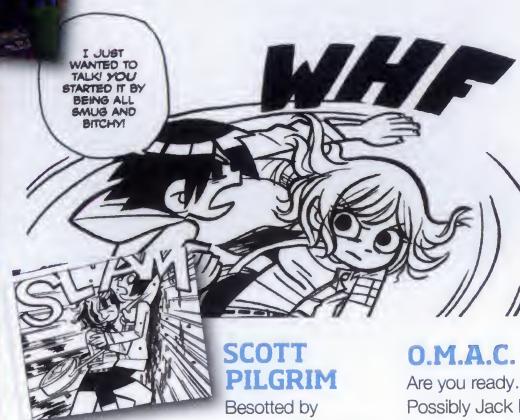


STRONTIUM DOG

Meet Johnny Alpha, mutant bounty hunter of the 22nd century. His super powers include the ability to see through walls and read men's minds. His sidekicks include a Viking he met on a time travel adventure and a chick with three tits. From the co-creator of Judge Dredd, this is balls-out sci-fi mayhem.

JUDGE ANDERSON

Investigating supernatural crimes, matching wits with inter-dimensional demons, and battling mutant freaks – all part of a day's work for the Psi-Judges of Mega-City One. Blonde bombshell Judge Anderson's telepathic and precognitive abilities would work well in a moody, *BioShock*-style game of psychological terror. And let's not forget that form-fitting lycra uniform...



SCOTT PILGRIM

Besotted by Ramona Flowers, Scott Pilgrim can only win her hand once he's defeated all seven of her evil ex-boyfriends. Soon to be a major motion picture, this cult comic book would translate perfectly to video game form, since it was so heavily inspired by games in the first place.



O.M.A.C.

Are you ready... for the world that's coming? Possibly Jack Kirby's strangest creation, O.M.A.C.'s ultra-super powers make him a literal One-Man Army Corps. In a bat-poop insane near future world, criminal tyrants are wreaking havoc with exploding robo-babes and rays that can destroy entire oceans. Only one man and his mighty Mohawk can save us!



YOU COULD HAVE AN STI WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING

You might think your partner is safe, but with many sexually transmissible infections the symptoms don't show for months or even years. If you have had unprotected sex, see your doctor about getting tested. Using a condom is the best way to avoid getting or spreading infections like chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhoea and HIV.

**STIs ARE SPREADING FAST
ALWAYS USE A CONDOM**

www.australia.gov.au/STI



AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



TOKYO, JAPAN

TOTALLY BRA-BARIOUS

Meet the next big thing in Japan after *Monster Hunter*: the Marriage Hunting Bra. With a countdown clock located just under the cups that displays the deadline for getting hitched and pens in the side for signing the marriage certificate, the bra is for women who wish to advertise their knot-tying intentions. Once an engagement ring is inserted in a slot above the clock, "The Wedding March" melody plays, signifying a successful engagement.

TEXAS, USA

L33T WORDZ

The English language is about to receive its one millionth word says the Global Language Monitor, and that word could be 'defriend', meaning to kick someone off your contact list, or it could be 'noob', an abbreviation of the word 'newbie', a derogatory term referring specifically to someone who is more new to games or a community than oneself. OPS fears the end of the world is nigh.

WARWICK, ENGLAND

HOT-CHOC RACER

We've seen the Toyota Prius in *Gran Turismo*, and the next surprising motor that could make its way in to the series is a Formula 3 car that runs on a mixture of chocolate and vegetable oil. Apart from utilising the biofuel mixture, the car also incorporates carrots in the steering wheel, as well as flax fibre and soybean oil in the seat, say scientists at the University of Warwick. They hope it can reach a top speed of 230km/h.

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

HOW TO QUIT WITH WIT

A programmer at 2K Australia, Jarrad Woods, quit his job and made a game out of his resignation. Woods made the notice, a platformer with the 'I quit' message, by combining elements of the legendary *Super Mario Bros.* as well as his own game *Polychromatic Funk Monkey*. In the farewell message he states "Thank you 2K Australia! You gave me a paycheck, an incredible project and a world-class team to learn from. But my princess is in another castle." Feel free to go and check his work out at www.farbs.org/Message.html

SAN FRANCISCO, USA

GAME DRAIN

Our gaming brethren in the States have seen a steep drop in game sales, 17 percent to US\$1.03 billion during the month of April – the second month in a row such an event has happened. Daniel Ernst, a Hudson Square Research analyst, said this was particularly painful as "last year [we] had two of the biggest games of the year launch in April, and that was not the case this year," referring to *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Mario Kart*.

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS

UK	
Source: ELSPA	
1	FIFA 09
2	X-Men Origins: Wolverine
3	Killzone 2
4	Resident Evil 5
5	LittleBigPlanet
6	SEGA Mega Drive Collection
7	Call of Duty: World at War
8	Street Fighter IV
9	Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
10	The Godfather II

JAPAN	
Source: VGChartz	
1	Killzone 2
2	Musou Orochi Z
3	Senjo no Valkyria Gallian Chronicles
4	Biohazard 5
5	Demon's Soul
6	X-Blades
7	World Post World
8	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
9	Street Fighter IV
10	Daikoukai Jidai Online: Cruz del Sur

USA	
Source: NPD	
1	X-Men Origins: Wolverine
2	MLB 09: The Show
3	Killzone 2
4	Call of Duty: World at War
5	Resident Evil 5
6	The Godfather II
7	Valkyria Chronicles
8	Soulcalibur IV
9	Guitar Hero: Metallica
10	Grand Theft Auto IV

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

JUNE 2009

- PS3** *Damnation*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3** *inFamous*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3** *Red Faction Guerrilla*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3** *Guitar Hero Smash Hits*
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3** *Ghostbusters*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3** *Prototype*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3** *FUEL*
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PSP** *Monster Hunter: Freedom Unite*
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3** *SuperCar Challenge*
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3** *Dynasty Warriors 6 Empires*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

JULY 2009

- PS3** *Sacred 2: Fallen Angel*
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: FANTASTIC
- PS3** *Ashes Cricket 2009*
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3** *Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood*
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3** *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10*
GENRE: SPORT | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3** *Overlord II*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI



- PS3** *Fight Night Round 4*
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: EA

LATE/TBC 2009

- PS3** *Need For Speed SHIFT*
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3** *Borderlands*
GENRE: FPS | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
- PS3** *Dark Void*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3** *DJ Hero*
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3** *Blur*
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3** *Guitar Hero 5*
GENRE: MUSIC | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3** *Batman: Arkham Asylum*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3** *Dragon Age: Origins*
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3** *Wolfenstein*
GENRE: FPS | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3** *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3** *Bayonetta*
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"I drove around Monaco and Monte Carlo, along the mountain roads of Switzerland, stopping in hotels in Milan, Venice and Rome, collecting data for a fortnight." Yu Suzuki offers a little insight on how he made the arcade classic, *OutRun*.



"I think the worst time for me that I've ever had an inspirational idea ... was actually when I was being intimate with my wife." Veteran game designer Peter Molyneux on what not to do in the bedroom. Cheers Peter, we'll keep it in mind.



"We will be expanding the PlayStation Network to hardware other than the PS3" Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer talking about the prospects of using the PSN in your telly and other Sony products to download apps and games.



"Soon." The official word from CEO of Polyphony Digital and Gran Turismo creator/producer, Kazunori Yamauchi, on when we'll see a damage model implemented within the series. Could he be any more vague?

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



1 *X Men Origins: Wolverine*



2 *Killzone 2*



3 *Singstar Pop*



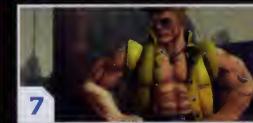
4 *Grand Theft Auto IV*



5 *Resident Evil 5*



6 *Guitar Hero: World Tour*



7 *Street Fighter IV*



8 *Tom Clancy's HAWX*



9 *Saint's Row 2*



10 *Godfather 2*



WHY SO SPURIOUS?

One of the laziest things a games writer can do is refuse to cover a certain subject on principle. I refer to those who make a big deal about turning up their noses at violence. They use their self-righteous indignation as an excuse to condemn action games out of hand. They use affectations of morality to mask sloppy reporting.

They try to make laziness look like a virtue.

There was a classic example of this in *Edge* magazine recently (where else?). An acerbic, biting, and relatively fact-free examination of the upcoming third-person shooter *Rogue Warrior*.

In his preview, the writer made a big deal about how the real-life commando Dick Marcinko was now in his sixties. He rammed home how the dialogue had a lot of swearing. He pointed out that Mickey Rourke was an excellent choice for the voice of this bearded, commanding extrovert.

He mentioned that you can play covertly, or overtly, and that it doesn't really matter which.

He implied that the most impressive aspect of the game was the hero's pony tail physics.

A person who read this article, knowing nothing of the game, developer, or its star, might take away the notion

that *Rogue Warrior* is doomed to be yet another nothing action game. The reviewer's sin lay in his omissions.

Even if Marcinko's self-styled image is '80% bullshit', his career is noteworthy. He led an elite commando team tasked with testing the security of America's most secret defence facilities.

His team, Red Cell, once seized control of a nuclear missile submarine. He has personally snuck on and off Air

“People want to play games about heroes who kill commies”

Force One. Had he chosen to, he could have left a huge, steaming turd in the President's personal shitter.

And who's to say he didn't?

The adventures of Dick Marcinko – real, imagined, or purely speculative – are a perfect fit for an action game.

Then there's the developer, Rebellion. The reviewer neglected to mention that this is the outfit that brought us the cult hit military action game *Sniper Elite*. It also brought us the cruelly ignored, highly underrated *Rogue Trooper*.

A notable design strength of this sci-fi action title was that you could play covertly, or overtly. You could focus on sniping, or run-and-gun action, stealth kills or grenades. All paths were rewarding; how you played was entirely up to you.

Rogue Warrior could use the exact same code base as *Rogue Trooper* and still be a rock-solid game. The *Edge* writer neglected to mention this, preferring to snidely remark that its protagonist, 'Demo Dick', personally selected what his eye-stabbing sneak attacks would look like.

So, Mr. Uppity – what gives? Why so serious? Or: why so spurious? The truth is, actions speak louder than words.

Those who have crafted soliloquies in defence of their willful impotence look on men of action with disgust.

Face facts: nobody's ever going to make a game about being a writer for *Edge* magazine. People want to play games about heroes who kill commies. Not about whining poms who cry themselves to sleep.

Angry Sackboy is an ex-video game journalist who'd like nothing more than to punch any and all holier-than-thou types in the face. He's also a big fan of ANZAC Day.



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COMPETITIONS

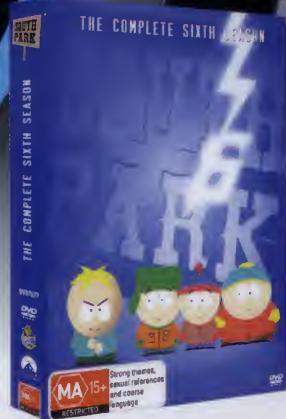
WIN! WIN! WIN!



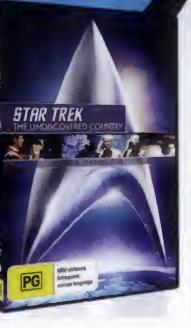
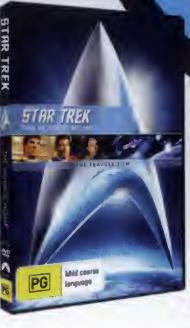
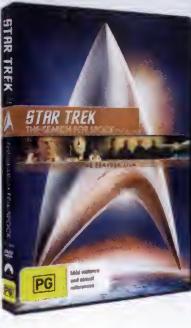
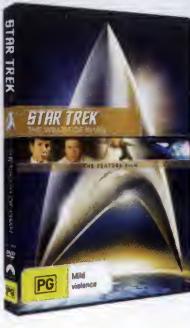
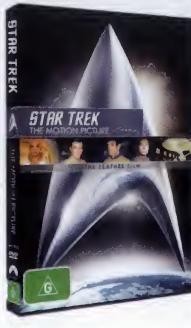
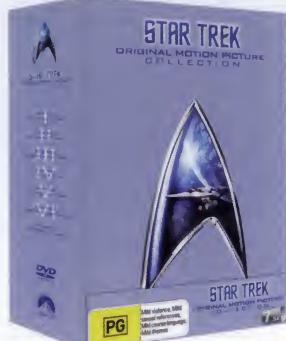
STAR TREKKING

Thanks to Paramount Home Entertainment we've got five massive *Star Trek* prize packs to give away to five lucky readers. To celebrate the recent theatrical release of *Star Trek*, Paramount is releasing the original motion pictures remastered and restored for the first time. *Star Trek: Original Motion Picture Collection* includes six discs featuring the original *Star Trek* films, digitally remastered in high definition (*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* has been fully restored) with new 7.1 Dolby TrueHD audio and over 14 hours of special features, including two-and-a-half hours of all-new material. The collection also includes a bonus disc entitled *Star Trek: The Captains' Summit* that features a 70-minute exclusive round table discussion hosted by Whoopi Goldberg in which William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, Patrick Stewart and Jonathan Frakes share candid moments and intimate details about life on the set. The prize pack also includes a limited edition *Star Trek* phaser 3-in-1 remote control, season of *Star Trek: The Original Series* on Blu-ray and season six of *South Park* on DVD.

To enter, tell us the most creative reason why you shouldn't beam down in a red shirt. Entry instructions below.



STAR TREK: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE COLLECTION OUT ON DVD AND BLU-RAY!





WILD WILD WEST

Thanks to Ubisoft we've got 10 copies of the promising-looking Western shooter *Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood* to give away.

To enter, tell us what your outlaw name would be and why. Entry instructions below.



HOWZAT!

Thanks to Atari we've got a fantastic *Ashes Cricket 2009* prize pack to give away, featuring a copy of the upcoming title on PS3, plus a Kookaburra bat, ball and cap – personally signed by Aussie skipper Ricky Ponting. Four runners-up will receive a copy of the game.

To enter, tell us your favourite Aussie cricketing moment and why. Entry instructions below.

HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions email your entries to ops@derwenthoward.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 12/08/2009. Winners will be notified by mail.

Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

WHY WAIT?

Ah, I love getting a new game with that crisp smell of the plastic that you haven't gone all Wolverine on, the unscratched box art that just shines in that light. Yes, I am sure we've all had that great feeling of just getting that game back from the store. It is a great feeling that everyone has if they are just keen on that one game. It is worth the wait... is what I should say but every day I feel that one truth is not so true! Yes, Sony is a great company with a great range of games but sometimes I feel that we down under just aren't treated like our brothers in Japan and America.

Kingdom Hearts 2 was a great game and I feel like I've given about 60 hours of life to that game. What wasn't so great was the waiting period, when it came out in Japan in 2005 I thought to myself, "Gee, now that it's out in Japan it can't possibly be too long 'til it's out in Australia". Ha! What a fool I was as I waited and waited and waited until it came out here in September. Now while it was worth the wait I have to say that that had to be one of the most gruelling processes of my life. I can tell you that I want it to be the last time that something as painful as that happens. But honestly nothing much has changed and I just know that it won't be the last time I'll cry waiting for a game.

I have to admit that the main offender of this crime is none other than Nintendo itself. Being a former Wii fan since its release I had especially wanted games like *Super Mario Galaxy*. But *Super Mario Galaxy* was put back to about November 2007, almost a year after the promised release date. That's like telling one of your mates you'll be round in 10 minutes then rocking up a year later; IT'S JUST NOT GOOD ENOUGH. After that I was just fed up with Nintendo and went on to Sony, but as I was saying earlier this "delayed bug" isn't just limited to Nintendo.

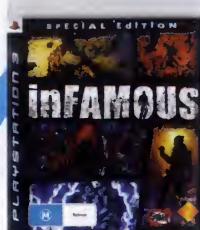
The final example to this problem is one of the most anticipated PSP games this year, and probably of all time, is the *Final Fantasy* fighting game, *Dissidia*. Its release in Japan last year has had me on the edge of my seat just waiting for an Australian release date. Because it is on the PSP



it has no region code and therefore is a hot import item for Japanese speaking people. But I don't speak Japanese so, for now, it's gameplay vids only. The worst part of it is that America and Europe have got some hints as to when they'll get it. I just need you guys to tell if all these delays and waits are justified. Because what am I gonna do in the mean time? Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots?

Khaya Mpehle, via email

Waiting is rough, we agree, but it seems like a lot of the games you're after are coming from Japan. We guess it takes time to translate all that RPG doublespeak from Japanese to English. Anything over six months is taking the piss though, you're right. We guess the only real solution here is learn Japanese. Better yet, live in Japan for a while. Have we recommended that before? Because depending on what day of the week you ask us Japan is the second coolest country on Earth. Behind Australia.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... INFAMOUS

The letter of the month this issue will receive a copy of *inFAMOUS* for their troubles – enjoy!

LONG SHOT

Hey OPS, I like many hopefuls, send in OPS feedback mail every now and then, but a lot of my friends like OPS as well and they write in almost as much as me, if not more. So if neither me nor my mates have gotten into your golden archives after two-and-a-half years of dedicated reading and fanatical subscriptions, continuous to this day, then is there much chance of us ever getting into the almighty mag?

Tate Pryor, via email



Yes.



Every game is somebody's first

THE HARD WORD

Hey guys, I haven't been reading the mag long but I like it, a lot. Anyway, down to business! I agree, games are seeming to get a whole lot easier these days, but there are still games that put up a good fight but are still enjoyably easy (eg. *GTA IV*, *Uncharted*, etc.). Being quite a young gamer, I missed the times were games were extremely hard like *Driver* for example. I'm so young, in fact, the first time I ever picked up a PlayStation controller (or really any controller) the game I was playing was *The Simpsons: Hit and Run* for the PS2.

Ryan Von Einem, via email

*Good to have you on board Ryan. Sometimes it is easy for us to forget there are plenty of PlayStation gamers who were still in Pull-Ups when the world first saw the likes of *Gran Turismo*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Tomb Raider*, *GTA* and *Driver*. If you want a real challenge, pick up some secondhand PSone games. That was when not all games wanted to let you finish them.*

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Competition ends 30 June, 2009.

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Game costs \$7.00. SMS cost is free. Download/WAP charges may apply.

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Promotion opens 9am AEDT on 22/05/09, closes 5pm AEDT on 30/6/09. Entry open to Aus residents 18 years & over with a Telstra mobile phone handset capable of supporting Eligible Mobile Games, excl management, employees or contractors of Telstra and other companies associated with the Promotion (& immediate families). Drawn by electronic draw system on 01/7/09 by Anisimoff Legal at 34 Chandos St, St Leonards, NSW. Winners will be notified by phone and writing on 1/7/09 and details published in The Australian on 03/7/09. Electronic re-draw for unclaimed prizes on 01/10/09 unless winner is from WA (unclaimed prizes will be retained until 01/7/10). Authorised by permit numbers: NSW: LTPS/09/03641, ACT: TP 09/01632. The Promoter is Telstra Corporation Limited ABN 33 051 775 556 of 151 Clarence St, Sydney NSW. Visit bigpondgames.com for full terms and conditions and a list of Eligible Mobile Games.

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THE HALO COMPANY

gameloft

BIGPOND

NEXT G NETWORK

Speak to us!

SEQUEL FEVER

Hey OPS, just wanna start off by saying great mag, great reviews, yadda yadda yadda. Anyway, I just wanted to write in to have a talk/rant/get your opinion on something that has really bugged me within the games industry for a long time. Sequels.

Now, I know this topic is well overdone in most conversations, but I just wanted to express my disgust, if you will, at some things that have really gotten my goat, namely, annual releases and stuff like that. I don't understand why big name companies (EA I'm looking at you) are so compelled to bring out an annual release of games like NBA, NHL and Tiger Woods PGA Tour, among other things. I simply can't understand why we need yet another annual soccer game clogging up the shelves, which only has the most marginal improvements over the last game. Why? What the hell is wrong with just sitting back and letting the dev team do the best they can for more than a measly eight or nine months, and just let them actually try to innovate for once? Why the same old camera angles, the same exacting controls to the last version, the same damn graphics as the last game? If I honestly see one more *Madden* game on the shelves of my local EB, taking up the space which would be much more deserving of, say, a sequel to the old *Future Cop L.A.P.D.* from the good old days of PSOne, I'm going to loose my freaking mind.

Okay, now I can understand why they do it. It's just a damn cash cow that they're still milking instead of sending her over to the retired games franchises paddock to graze and mill out her remaining days in

peace. It's of course not just happening to sport games, though they're the majority of offenders. Don't get me wrong, I love *Ratchet & Clank*, but if they're to succeed in the future of the games industry, they really need to step it up in terms of design. Branch out, innovate, do something damn it! It's just painful to see all of these great ideas that have been locked up in the warehouses of the gaming industry and never even glanced at again. I could go on to name dozens of these sorts of games that really need the funding for a sequel, or even a remake, but you probably get the drift.

Please tell me your opinion on the matter, since I'm only 17, and I would like some insight from some experienced insiders of the games world such as yourselves.

Rohan Day, via email

We can see where you're coming from; there ARE a lot of sequels on the way this year. You may have to lighten up a fraction on sports games though – licenses like these would likely depend on a game a year. If EA didn't make a *FIFA* game a year, somebody else would. At any rate, sports games improve year to year. *FIFA 10*, for example, won't be a game built in a year – it'll be a game honed for a year. They don't start again each year, they improve the last one. Essentially, *FIFA 10* will be a footy game that took three to four years to make. In the end, sequels of popular games are bankable – money makes the world go round.



THE PlayStation® CROSSWORD!

Official Magazine - Australia

TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME!

How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close August 12.

ACROSS

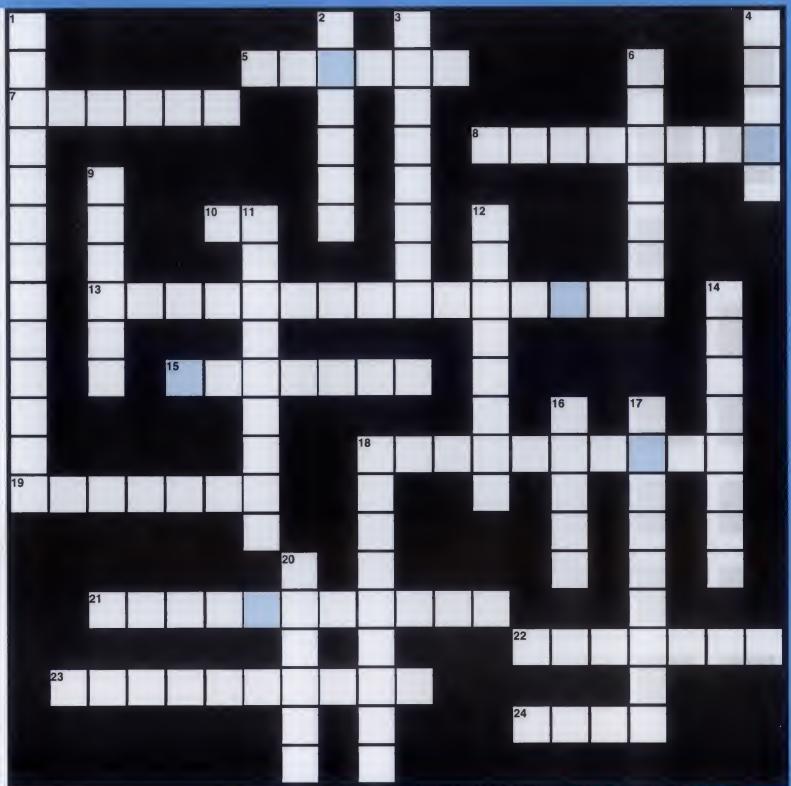
- Name the evil computer that runs Aperture Science
- What's the correct Russian pronunciation of the name of the Russian team in *Wipeout*?
- Ubisoft's largest studio is located in which city?
- If Miss Piggy is the ego, and Kermit is the superego, then Animal is the...
- What must Ghostbusters never do?
- Wipeout 2097* energy drink
- What's the nationality of the sniper in *Team Fortress 2*?
- Before your Xbox 360 dies, you see the...
- What racing game was announced for PSP in 2004?
- A *Haunting Grounds* cheat lets

you increase the size of the main character's...

- In *Overlord II*, you start as...
- Hairstyle worn by Phil Harrison, former head of SCE development?

DOWN

- Experimental soft drink formula in *Fallout 3*?
- Before Everyday Shooter, Jonathan Mak created...
- According to urban legend, CIA mind control game?
- Anti Gravity Racing League mascot
- Online subculture pandered to by the BEAST class in *Phantasy Star Portable*?
- What disease is Folding@Home working to cure?
- The Simpsons Crash Bandicoot* parody
- Tron Bonne's little robot helpers
- Blue Team Buddies accent
- Pen name of Valkyria Chronicles character designer
- In Japan, *Resident Evil* is...
- Codemasters is dumbing down their racers to appeal to the...
- What is the name of the Russian team in *Wipeout*?



Across 1. DAVIDHARTER 3. MONTREAL 6. BULLFROG 8. CREATOR 11. SILVA 12. KUTARGI 13. NINJA 14. SHINRA 15. BLOODRAYNE 16. FUNNY 17. FREQUENCY 18. GLADOS 19. SILENTHILL 20. AMALVE 21. STORMRISE Down 1. DAMACY 2. PSYGNOSIS 4. RESCUE 5. DONOVAN 6. BLOOD 7. MATHIAS 9. EVOLUTON 10. TOSHINDEN 15. BIRDMAN 16. FIGHTER Across 1. DAVIDHARTER 3. MONTREAL 6. BULLFROG 8. CREATOR 11. SILVA 12. KUTARGI 13. NINJA 14. SHINRA 15. BLOODRAYNE 16. FUNNY 17. FREQUENCY 18. GLADOS 19. SILENTHILL 20. AMALVE 21. STORMRISE Down 1. DAMACY 2. PSYGNOSIS 4. RESCUE 5. DONOVAN 6. BLOOD 7. MATHIAS 9. EVOLUTON 10. TOSHINDEN 15. BIRDMAN 16. FIGHTER

Last month's answers

1. WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?



2. NAME THE MUPPET PROTAGONISTS OF POINT BLANK

3. WHO AM I?

When you first met me, I wet my pants. Now I live with a six-year-old girl. She's my adopted daughter – honest!



4. NAME A GUITAR-PLAYING 2D EWE

5. THE INDOCTRINATOR, THE GRAVITON GUN, AND SATELLITE RAIN WERE ALL WEAPONS IN WHICH PSONE GAME?

6. NAME THE DESIGN AGENCY THAT CREATED THE UNIQUE LOOK OF WIPEOUT

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7. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:



Answers: 1. They all voiced characters in Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust. 2. Dr. Don & Dr. Dan. 3. Hall O'Connor. Emmerich 4. Um Jammer Lammy 5. Syndicate Wars 6. The Designers Republic. 7. *Timesplitters* (b) God Hand (c) GrimGrimoire (d) Whiplash (e) Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner – Raidou Kuzunoha vs The Soulless Army (f) Odin Sphere

CUTTINGS

WATCH OUT

PS: Put this email on the next issue.

PPS: In an opportune moment, I will change my e-mail address so beware.

Sam Kathryayner
via email

Okay, done. Wait, beware of what?

ENTER THE FIST

Guys, just saying I loved the Kung Pow captions you put for the *Batman Arkham Asylum* feature for the June mag. Oh, and I remember you guys saying a long time ago that there should be a Chuck Norris video game. Well there is! It's on the Collecovision. Thanks guys, you rock.

Wes Stinton, via email

Sweet. We're still pissed noone picked up on the Blazing Saddles gags in the Red Dead Redemption piece. Sigh. Thanks for the heads up on Chuck, although we still feel he deserves a next gen update.

MAD MEL

Blazing Saddles references. Win. This mag just went up a notch.

Trent V. via email

We retract our previous point. What notch are we at now?

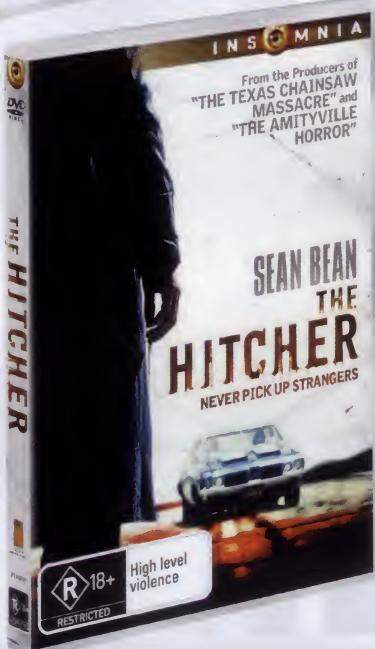
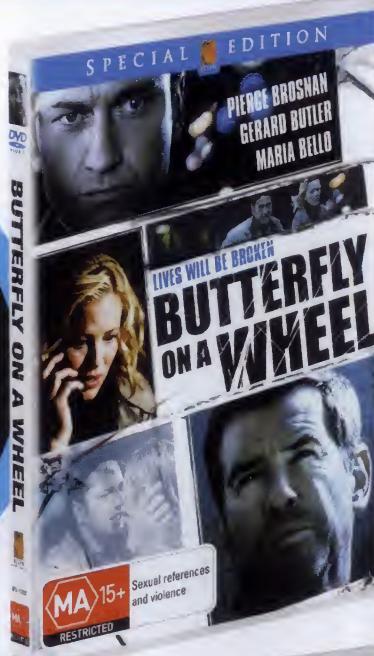
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DERWENT HOWARD



Words: Luke Reilly

SIX AND OUT

Talking cricket with the best batsman in the business

It's been some time since we've put leather on willow in the digital arena. *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007* was the last time we padded up on a PlayStation console – and that was back in March 2007, on PS2.

Ashes Cricket 2009 will mark the debut appearance of the gentleman's game on PS3, and it'll no doubt prove pretty popular with punters around the country. We're going to need more time with the game than we had in our brief sitting over at Atari HQ before we make up our mind on how Aussie studio Transmission has handled the responsibility, but we do have a few initial thoughts. Our quick capsule preview at this point would say it still feels very much like cricket games over the past few years; there's a lot of on-screen assistance and stats, the game uses the Channel Nine cricket music (which is rad), and it features Warnie (which is even more rad).

We're a little concerned that the stop/start nature of these products is a hindrance to cricket games improving (*Ashes Cricket 2009* is built from scratch, but *FIFA 10*, for example, is built upon years of initial grunt work). We wonder, for instance, whether it would've been better to spend two years improving *Ricky Ponting International Cricket 2007*, or two years building a new one.

We'll know come July though, and we're looking forward to it. Until then, check out our interview with the man himself, Ricky Ponting, and Mark Houareau, Lead Artist at Transmission.



"We didn't want to reinvent the game completely, we just wanted to get what was wrong right"

OPS: Could you tell us a bit about *Ashes Cricket 2009*?

Mark Houareau: We built the game from scratch – everything's brand new. The idea for us is complete immersion, we want gamers to just experience cricket, whether that's at a beginner's level or an advanced level.

Ricky Ponting: My association with Atari goes back a long way, you've probably seen my face on these games for a good couple of years now, and every time one of these games comes along they add a whole heap of improvements. For me the leap from game to game is quite amazing. The way that these games can relate back to the actual game of cricket, attracting young kids into the sport is great. We all know that a lot of kids are more attracted to video games at an early age, for them to be able to play something like this, as lifelike as it is, has a really good impact on them possibly wanting to go out and play cricket, and that's the major reason I've been involved in these games over the last few years.

And with the ability to play this game online, you can imagine how many Australians are going to be playing the English when the Ashes comes around.

If there was one weakness from the last game, it was the inability, on the bowling side of things, to put that much variation into the different types of deliveries, the game was a bit more dominated by the batsman. Now that the team have put a bit more into that side of things, the game is a bit more balanced I think.

OPS: You've been working on this game for two years now – how difficult do you find it to transfer a sport like cricket, that has so many variables, into a video game that functions well all the time?

MH: We looked at every other cricket game that had ever been made and at where they went wrong. We didn't want to reinvent the game completely, we just wanted to get what was wrong right. We did a lot of research on forums, a lot of talking to people in general, just to get a feel for what they didn't enjoy in the game. A lot of people, like Ricky said, enjoyed the batting, but not the bowling, so the key thing for us was to improve the bowling, make it fun, make it intuitive and educational.

Outside of that, every member of our team are huge cricket fans, and huge sports game fans, so we know what the standard is out there. We know that cricket games haven't been as good as they have in the past – we really wanted to push this game up to that level.

OPS: You mentioned that the game was being made more accessible to people who don't know that much about cricket – how are you guys attempting to do that?

MH: Mainly by visual feedback on the screen, whether it's buttons, words, or commentary – there's always help there for you. And it's something that, once you get used to the game, you can remove.

RP: There is also a coaching part of the game as well. If you don't know anything about the bowling side of things, you can go to that coaching tutorial section and learn about how the game of cricket works. The good thing is that someone who had never played cricket before

wouldn't have to just jump straight into a game and get confused.

OPS: One of the strengths of the last games was the rotating commentary, just like TV – will it be the same this time round?

MH: There's actually six commentators, and they sort of take a back step this time – they comment when something exciting happens, but we've really focused on other types of sound, like the crowd, to really bring you into the game. There are chants, music playing from the crowd, and it helps you feel like you're playing, as opposed to feeling like you're watching it on TV.

OPS: Have you guys added in the details from other types of cricket, such as Twenty20, and will there be any updates of the squads online in the future?

MH: We have squads of 23 players, you can customise the squads, and we have custom teams that you can take online. The only thing you can't do is change the likenesses of the Australian or English cricket players.

OPS: We like how you said, Ricky, that you felt like you could bring people to cricket through games. A lot of people in other sports, such as football, seem to be afraid of video games and feel like it's killing their sport. One England manager claimed England would have won the World Cup if it wasn't for video games! How do you respond to that?

RP: Well, we've got the Ashes coming up in England and it'll take place during the cricket off season when the weather'll probably be too terrible for kids to get out and play, so this is something they can do inside that'll keep them thinking and learning about cricket. I actually think that's a great thing.

OPS: We note ice hockey games continue to have fighting, because it's a part of the game. Did you guys, in that two years, ever consider a sledging button?



MH: No, no sledging buttons...

RP: Only for other teams, Australians don't sledge, when the Australians are bowling there's no sledging. [laughs]

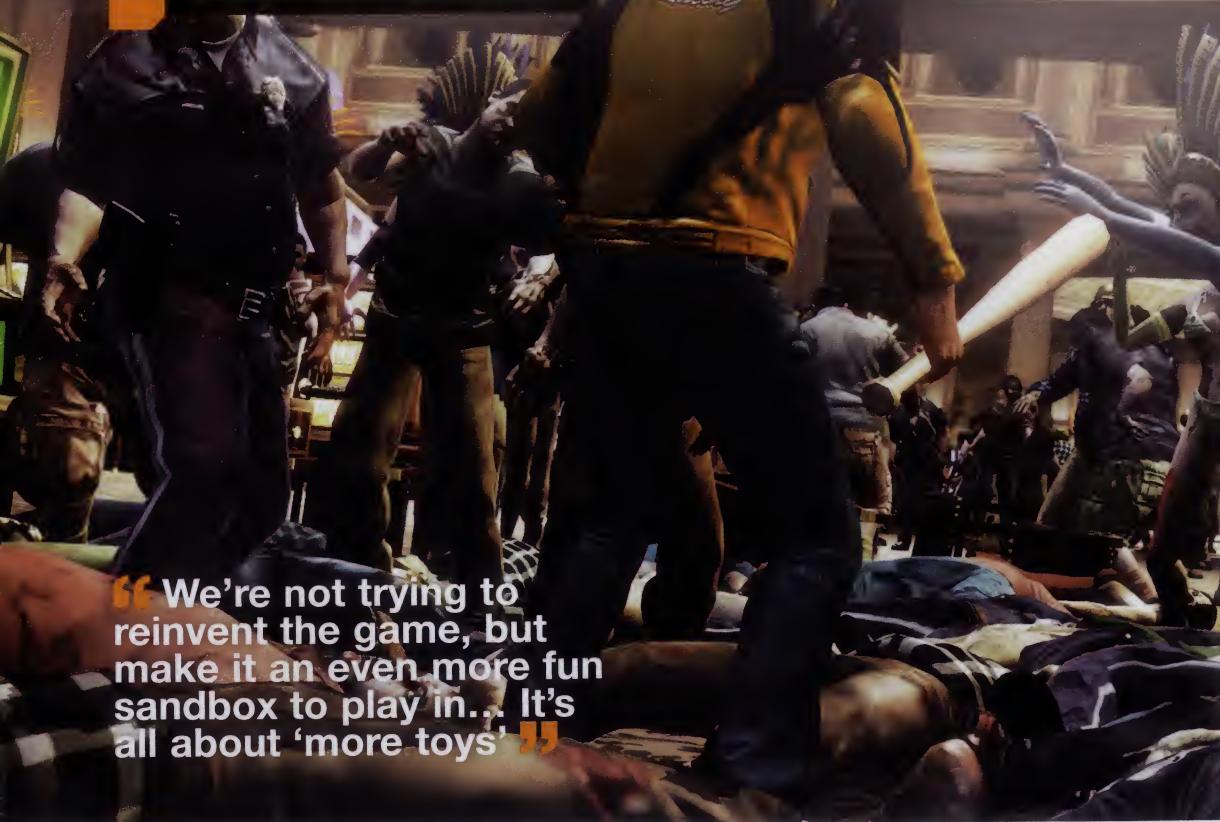


INCOMING

Exclusive looks at the very best



34 NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT
Is EA's racer poised to take the chequered flag or stall at the start line?



"We're not trying to reinvent the game, but make it an even more fun sandbox to play in... It's all about 'more toys'."

PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

DEAD RISING 2

When buckets attack

IT'S LIKE...

Resident Evil



GTA

In Japan the black humour of the original *Dead Rising* (which, criminally, didn't make its way to PlayStation) was seen, in the words of *Dead Rising* 2's producer, Keiji Inafune, as 'grotesque'. Westerners loved it, appreciating the humour. It was another Capcom zombie game, but completely separate to the *Resident Evil* series. Sure, it was tense, there was a strong male lead and a conspiracy to uncover, but it didn't have the same ominous atmosphere. If *Resident Evil* is the *Poltergeist* of videogames, then *Dead Rising* is *Shaun of the Dead*. Inafune-san recently described the sequel as "not just a game about killing lots and lots of zombies. It also has a nice comical aspect to it." We recently saw a demo of the game in action and totally agree.

Enter Chuck Greene, motocross champion. Chuck's trapped in Fortune City, a casino town somewhere in America, trying to find his missing daughter. Between him and his child are several thousand zombies to slay and a variety of weapons and items to make a mess of the undead. The mantra of both titles is 'anything and everything is a weapon', though the sequel takes this core element further. Staring out from one end of a strip in the casino, a sea of zombies – roughly 1000 – lies ahead. On their own they don't present much of a

threat, though they will clamp onto Chuck's neck given a chance. Dan Brady, Executive Producer, CEO and General Manager of Blue Castle Games – the Canadian co-developer of *Dead Rising* 2 – took charge of Chuck. His aim for the demo was to show the sandbox nature of the game, rather than explaining the narrative, as well as the possibilities the new weapons allowed. Stepping forward into the crowd, Chuck grabs a baseball and winds up before each swing. Blood squirts out of the wound like a bottle of tomato sauce that's been jumped on as the bat meets flesh. As he makes his way around the strip, weaving in and out of the crowd and into the separate parlours, the poker machines trilled a digital scale. The high pitch of these tunes was in direct contrast to the low gurgle of the zombies, silenced when Chuck dropped the bat and picked up a roulette table to make more mess. He could've picked up a cash register, or even one of the machines to knock a zombie down. The kill count, displayed in the bottom right hand corner of the screen, was in double figures.

Dispensing with the roulette table, Chuck nabs a stray automatic rifle and perforates the zombie horde. Brady was downbeat about the use of guns in the first *Dead Rising* – "they sucked" – but

with a Western developer this type of weapon has been given more force, and Chuck can move and shoot; a move that flummoxed Frank. Says Brady, "We're not trying to reinvent the game, but make it an even more fun sandbox to play in... It's all about 'more toys'." The kill count racked up as the gun ran dry. Chuck was then armed with a katana, slicing away limbs and extremities fell off, and we noted that it and other weapons sliced where they connected with a foe, rather than just being an arbitrary collision and result as in the first *Dead Rising*. Brady demonstrated the power of 'procedural cutting' by doing a Mickey Mouse in *Fantasia* and lopping a bad guy in twain, straight down the middle.

The toys kept coming. A zombie slaying favourite, the chainsaw, returns in vanilla and butterscotch-ripple flavours known, at this stage, as a 'paddlesaw' – basically a canoe paddle with a 'saw strapped to both



"Out of my way, jerkass!"



36 THE SABOTEUR
Skulking about and snapping necks in this WWII sneak-fest.



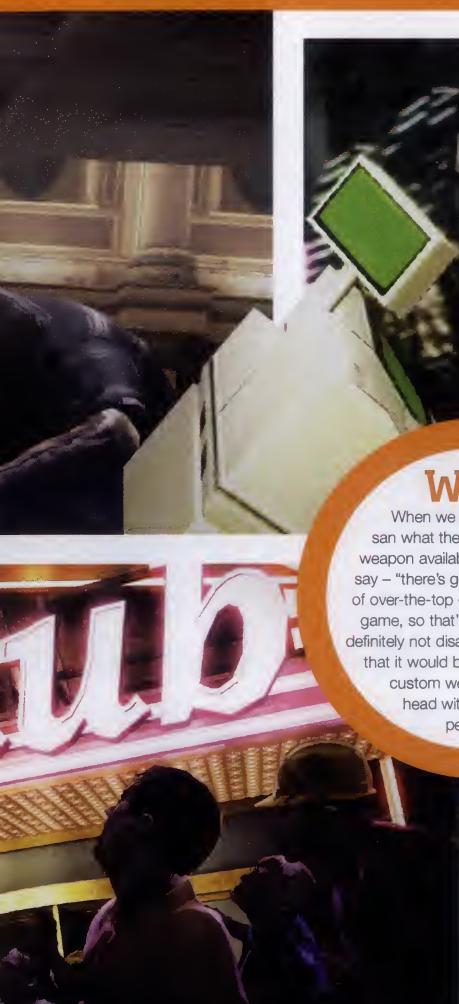
38 FIFA 10
OPS goes pitch-side with the follow up to last year's greatest football game.



39 DANTE'S INFERNO
Hell's angel or just an angry bloke fighting in front of fire?



40 ROGUE WARRIOR
Rebellion's action-a-thon inspired by the antics of a Navy SEAL



Hey, which one was Bullwinkle? ↗



Always bet on black! ↗



ends. Brady acknowledged that zombies "aren't much of a threat for the paddlesaw," so he increased the zombie count to 2,000 on screen. The strip that was already respectably filled began to throb with snarls and guttural noises. Chuck waded in, like a canoeist cruising upstream. Both chainsaws screamed at maximum throttle, zombies toppled over, the framerate remained consistent. The paddlesaw wasn't only a



WMD

When we asked Inafune-san what the most outrageous weapon available was he wouldn't say – "there's going to be really a lot of over-the-top great weapons in the game, so that'll be one area that'll definitely not disappoint" – but did hint that it would be possible to make custom weapons. Moose head with chainsaws, perhaps?

"What's the problem officer?" ↗



► "No, you can't have my number"

► "Okay, this next one's a cover"

► "Popping monos like it's 1992"

GREED AIN'T GOOD

The shopping mall location of *Dead Rising* was a deliberate nod to George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* and thematically it made a statement about consumerism and greed. "Setting *Dead Rising* 2 in a casino town represents Las Vegas and you think of America, and you also think of greed and trying to get rich quick, and that sort of consumerism," said Inafune-san. "Where these outbreaks have occurred has been indirectly linked to mankind's greed to his desire to get something for some reason, so that's why this place is very appropriate for having another *Dead Rising* occur."

looked at them funny – but their rationale is that the system forces players to use something else than just the spectacular paddlesaw or katana throughout, which could make the game too easy.

There was still sand in the box. After cruising the strip a couple of times, Chuck hopped off and found another bike, but with a difference. Well, two, really. A chainsaw was strapped to each handle. A machine like this in the Willamette shopping mall would be like using a rocket to kill a fly. Before taking off on his final run through the crowd, Brady added more zombies. And more. And more. By the time he stopped populating the area, there was 7,000 zombies on screen, 14 times that of the original. Chuck rode through the crowd and became a modern day Moses, both parting the zombie waters and creating a new Red Sea with a chainsaw bike rather than the will of God. The kill count flicked over like a Geiger counter in ➔

spectacle of the Western influence of 'more and bigger'; it was also showing off the capabilities of the new developer. "[We've blended] the chainsaw with the procedural cutting," said Brady. "We're trying to add a quality level to the weapons that wasn't there in *Dead Rising*". His next example was the motorbike.

Frank West could ride a bike, though his access to it was limited. Brady complained

that zombies would just bounce off the bike when Frank was on the hog, so expect Chuck's two-wheeler to show more weight. Riding through the crowd saw zombies flicked off to the side, cartwheeling head over arse. However, like *Dead Rising* before it, don't expect to get a great weapon and continually use it as they have a limited use. Some would break too early in the original – sledgehammers would fall apart if you

INCOMING

Dead Rising 2

If we were going to put, for example, 4,000 zombies inside a very small room that's possible

BLUSHING ZOMBIE

One of *Dead Rising*'s charms was its unconventional strategies. For example, a zombie can bite, but he can't if his teeth are unable to meet flesh. To that end, why not stick a bucket on his head? Go a step further with the drill bucket. Take one bucket, add three drills and insert a zombie. "A bucket can do more than embarrass; it can kill," said Brady. Genius? Maybe. Gruesome? Undeniably.



He's a lumberjack, but he's okay.



From playing Slayer to slaying

PSSST, KEEP THIS BETWEEN YOU AND ME

"In some of the zombie textures, some of the faces of the zombies, come directly from Blue Castle staff," said Inafune-san. "When I'm in my office playing it, I'm like 'take that, Frant!'" said Brady. "Maybe that's not healthy, I don't know, but it's certainly fun."

Chernobyl, well into the hundreds.

Though the achievement of 7,000 zombies on screen is staggering we were worried that the sheer number of them would become tedious for players to make their way through. Inafune-san agreed. "When you throw in everything else – characters, missions, sound, etcetera – it might be 5,000 or 6,000; we can't really say at this point in time," he said "That's probably overkill in a lot of situations. [However] this allows us to do what we want to, when we want to... If we were



► “Take this bunt!”



 Salsa? Who doesn't like salsa?

going to put, for example, 4,000 zombies inside a very small room that's possible." This technical muscle allows for more creative design choices with the horde in their formation, behaviour and location.

Despite the chaos, we don't expect the strip demo to be part of the game as we saw it, though it might be heavily modified. The area was littered with far too many high-powered weapons and was, ultimately, a pretty dull layout with two convenient dead-ends. The demo was an indication of the game at this relatively early stage and we were impressed, though there were a few criticism. Zombies would just fade into the ground once they'd been dispatched, and some of Chuck's movements and the death animations when a little clunky. Still, the refinements that will happen between now and next year when the undead walk the Earth, again should make this apocalyptic in scale. Just don't get between us and the paddlesaw, okay?  **Paul Taylor**

WE SAY

- ↑ Outrageous weapons
- ↑ 7,000 zombies onscreen
- ↓ Could be a big slog

OPS IS...





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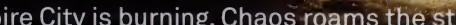
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9.2/10



PLAYSTATION® 3

INCOMING

Need For Speed: Shift



Go for the cockpit view for the most realism



How 'Audi-cious'. Snarf



IT'S LIKE...



PS3 | GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS

NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

Hard-nosed racing with head-spinning funk

It's like a rabbit infestation. Or perhaps a cane toad epidemic. Driving games seem to be multiplying and getting coital on a do-not-stop-for-children bolt to take over the planet. Consumers are spoiled for choice. Yet fresh rubber keeps pushing through.

It makes sense then if you're going to pull up to this already crowded grid besides mainstream favourite *GRID*, connoisseur's choice *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*, or the flashy *Ferrari Challenge*, you better have a nuclear stallion under the bonnet, or something up your exhaust pipe as a

point of difference. That's where *Need for Speed SHIFT* comes in. Making good on its promise to split the franchise into sub-genres, EA is set to drop the clutch on a serious racing game that has all the finesse of a classic simulator and the nuts-in-your-mouth speed of a jailbreak.

In fact, during our playtest at EA's London showcase, the game's developers started scratching themselves like lice-infested first graders when we referred to *SHIFT* as a hard-core simulator. This is an "authentic racing game" whose underlying

tech is a hardcore physics simulator. Under most circumstances this sort of response would seem like nothing but marketing schlock, but EA did a damn good job of convincing us otherwise.

Playing a racing game that doesn't feature flying banana peels or speckled stars can often be a vanilla-flavoured experience. Take it as a positive indicator then that while playing *SHIFT* our faces were stuck in a state of rubber glee. For a start it looks lickable. While some of the tracks weren't courting a mardi gras in the stands, as the fruity

GRID seemingly did, *SHIFT* is still centrefold gorgeous. Yet its pulchritude didn't detract from its blistering sense of speed. Admittedly we were scooting about in a Zonda, but Pagani beast or not, any game that can cause players to weep out a frown of fit-type saliva down their jaws has legs.

The demo units were also set up to show the game's assists in action. Knowing the majority of players are still searching for the fun in skidding out onto the dirt during a race's first corner, *SHIFT* features the usual suspects. From anti-lock braking, to traction control, and a dynamic racing line that changes colour to indicate how fast a corner should be taken – they're in *SHIFT* to make it a more palatable experience for those who don't have the inclination to turn the slot under their staircase into a faux racing cockpit. While the inclusion of these assists is predictable, the game's innovative focus means gamers may need them more than ever.

In a bid to be king of racing's innovation hill, *SHIFT* is out to concentrate on something new, something fresh – on the driver experience. At first this might sound

A HELPING HAND

Developer Slightly Mad Studios are the gurus rolling this bad boy out of the garage. Its pedigree includes work on the *GTR 2* and *GT Legends* series of racing games. While both were considered staunch simulation franchises, *SHIFT*'s assists and thrills should open up its trackside genius to a new market of chillaxed racing fans. Hopefully.

“Big impacts, meanwhile, yield the sort of blurred vision brought on by flash grenades in shooters. Yes children, the word for today is visceral”

Old school...



...new school



like bollocks, but it's not. While the usual racing perspectives will be offered, EA are going to huge lengths to seduce players into adopting the cockpit view. Developer Slightly Mad Studio have thrown on its anal beret and taken to crafting the most intricate and functional dashboards and driver consoles ever seen in a racer. All are authentic to each car's model and manufacturer too. Beyond looks, the cockpit camera is modelled to feel as though it's independently attached to the driver's head. Not only does this help exacerbate the sensation of speed and G-forces, but during

collisions the camera bounces around like a ball bearing surrounded by pinball bumpers. Big impacts, meanwhile, yield the sort of blurred vision brought on by flash grenades in shooters. Yes children, the word for today is visceral.

Players will also have complete control of the cockpit camera with the analogue stick, effectively meaning they'll be able to use the side windows to view the track ahead or stare down overtaking opposition (we couldn't find the 'flip bird' button, but we're hoping it's in there somewhere).

The other major point of difference is

the AI. Rather than feature SkyNet-powered intelligence whose sole purpose is to win each race, the opposing cars will often make human-styled blunders of their own volition. Perhaps they'll brake too late when taking a corner, or pick a wrong racing line. By adding in such idiosyncrasies EA is out to inject more drama onto the track. Not a bad thing.

SHIFT left us – surprisingly – with a beaming disposition. We were expecting vermin, a new useless breed to add to the infestation. Instead we found what just might be a natural predator. Sharp and hungry, and ready to devour all.  James Ellis

INTERVIEW WITH NFS SHIFT PRODUCER, JESSE ABNEY

OPS: How would you summarise the new direction for *Need for Speed SHIFT*?

Abney: *SHIFT* is one element in the new direction of the *Need for Speed* franchise. The franchise made an announcement a while back it would diversify and focus on each segment of the racing genre; those are action, arcade, and simulation. *SHIFT* definitely represents more of a simulation style racer, but we'd like to call it an authentic racing experience where fun is the main design element.

OPS: What sort of licenses can we expect to see in *SHIFT*?

EA: *Need for Speed* is about the licensed cars and vehicles, performance modifications, customisation. While we're not talking numbers today or the exact manufacturers we're working with there'll be some classic *Need for Speed* cars we always work with, like the Audis, the Porsches. We've seen the Zonda here, today. Yesterday we raced the McLaren F1, which was a unique ride as well. Given this is an authentic racing game you can expect to hear some big announcements in the weeks and months to come.

OPS: Can you tell us about any online plans?

Abney: Certainly with broadband becoming more pervasive what we're able to do is create DLC and post-launch development support to continue to add value to products months after they've been released. What that means for *SHIFT* is that it'll have a progressively rolling feature list that not only includes game modes and potentially cars and tracks, but community events and online modes and other aspects that roll out as the year progresses.

WE SAY

↑ Jowl-flapping speed

↑ Hot cars

↑ Precision driving

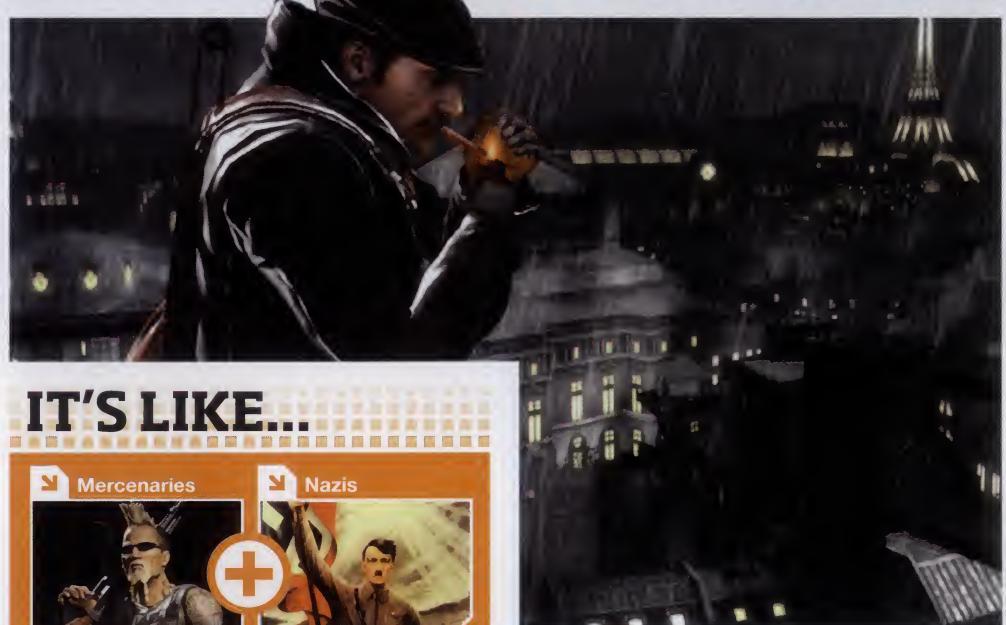
OPS IS...

Bracing for speed

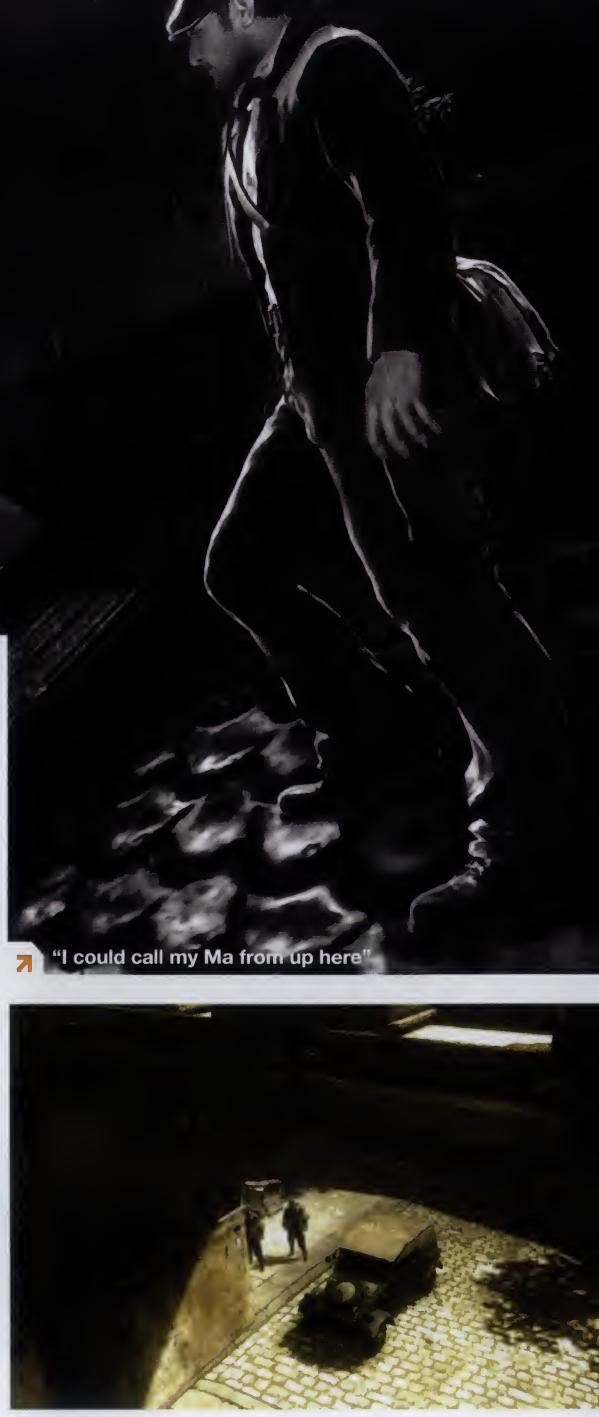


ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

Partly inspired by *Casablanca*, *The Saboteur* features a Cabaret/brothel in Paris where Sean spends a lot of his time. Ironically, while a lot of resistance banter happens here, the Nazis love the place, too. What makes it all the more interesting is that it's also packed full of sizzling bits of lady that will guarantee *The Saboteur* is at least placed on high shelves away from young minds. That's presuming it passes the censors here in Oz, of course. After the nubile bits in *Conan*, our money is on it getting in. But we have been wrong before.



IT'S LIKE...



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: PANDEMIC STUDIOS

THE SABOTEUR

Not even Nazis can stop the luck of the Irish

It's a World War II game, but it's not another World War II game. *The Saboteur*, brought to us by the deranged minds at Pandemic Studios that have had us blowing up buildings and playing John-Go-Terrorist since *Mercenaries*, fancies itself as different. It's not just another first-person gunner focusing on a rag-tag group of la-la-la meatheads trying to save Ryan's privates. It's an open-world spanner-chucking bout of espionage starring an Irish race car driver.

A jolly mix between Indiana Jones and Bruce Willis's three-balled John McClane, Sean Devlin is the title's reluctant hero who starts off racing cars for the frogs. Unfortunately for Devlin, a little bit of mischief near German troops back in the

late 1930s generally didn't end with an Ashton Kutcher episode of *Punk'd*, and his friend is murdered. Amazingly Devlin takes this personally and decides to try and rearm the German forces from the shadows, teaming up with the French resistance to blow the occupying Jerries out of the French capital. Viva La Paris, bitches!

Apart from this new WWII angle, what's particularly buzzin' about *The Saboteur* is how it plays. Pandemic is as well versed in open worlds as any studio and is hard at work ensuring that *The Saboteur* doesn't turn into a waltz through lifeless streets. According to Tom French, the game's lead designer, the aim is to create a sense of freedom punctuated by huge set pieces like one would see in a more level-based

title such as *Call of Duty*.

But how to do this when the world allows players so many different ways to advance, to approach each mission? *The Saboteur* is all about attracting players to mission critical areas packed with Nazis, have them sneak in using stealth or disguise, then ensure things go explosively pear-shaped. The mantra is, quiet in, loud out. Nice.

French was quick to point out that stealth is only ever going to be optional. In keeping with the vogue trend of refusing to say "no" to the player, getting to the heart of a mission needn't be quiet. During our demo at EA's London showcase, we followed French as he played through a mission set across Parisian rooftops.

Instead of utilising a disguise, he went in guns blazing and slowly hacked his way to his target, a cannon, which he promptly blew up with explosives.

French also pointed out that players could make missions easier by taking out supporting sniper and machine gun towers beforehand. Unlike the lame "collect x amount of parcels" extras many open-world games use to bait exploration, the extras here are interactive. Destroying posts, tanks, AA guns feature instead and provide benefits later on.

But the other huge ace *The Saboteur* has up its sleeve is its environment. The entire game world is 5.5 kilometres squared and covers the border between Germany and France. It's packed with busy

“The Saboteur is all about attracting players to mission critical areas packed with Nazis... then ensure things go explosively pear-shaped. The mantra is, quiet in, loud out”

**BETTER
THE
DEVLIN
YOU KNOW**

Sean Devlin, the game's protagonist, is based on a real chap called William Grover-Williams. Williams was a race car driver for Bugatti. Due to being fluent in French and a bit of a nutter, he was recruited to work with the French resistance as a saboteur. He was captured and killed.



The explosion tree in full boom

“Looks like a nice place to stay. I think I'll blow it up”

chateaus and coastal villages, and tanks ripe for the plunder menace the farm areas. However the most critical part of the game world is a compact but bustling version of Paris, complete with all the cities famous monuments. It may be not by an identical replication of the city, but that margin of difference has allowed the designers to pack in detail. Every neighbourhood has its own distinct look, there's something interesting to do on every block, and it's possible to scale the Eiffel Tower to get a birds-eye view of the game world. It all streams, too, with no loading when running or driving from place to place.

Apart from the detail, the other massive point to note is the game's colour scheme. Taking a massive page out of *Sin City*'s design, all occupied areas of Paris are painted in a desolate monochrome palette with sparse splashes of red to help players find their way. But it doesn't stay that way. After Sean nails the arses of the local Nazis to the wall and blows up the right amount of stuff, colour returns to the area along with a massive increase in the number of Parisians out on the street. This boosts the

area's Will to Fight, a dynamic index that shows how willing the locals are to support the player in combat. It's a bold art choice, and one we'd hope people respect.

Suffice to say *The Saboteur* is packing more than a beret's worth of potential. While it won't be out for a while, we're tipping this Irish son will come through and provide a rollicking ride of Nazi taxidermy.

► James Ellis



“Whhheeeeeee!”



WE SAY

- ↑ Varied action
- ↑ Stunning design
- ↓ Taking on too much?

OPS IS...
Ready to blow!



INCOMING

FIFA 10



A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS WITH PRODUCER DAVID RUTTER

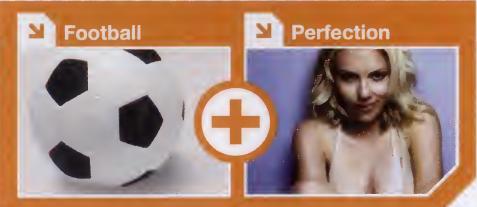
OPS: We hear you were a big *Pro Evolution Soccer* fan. Has that series had an effect on the direction of *FIFA*?

Rutter: Somewhat. The way I look at it is that we're focusing on what matters to people who play football games. Certainly since 07, maybe 06, EA Canada started really looking at the fundamentals of football and building brilliant gameplay. This year is the fourth year we've been doing it and we're still refining the fundamentals.

OPS: What's the most important addition to *FIFA* 10?

Rutter: From what I can talk about, 360° dribbling and the physical play. It gives players the ability to go anywhere using natural animations while skill dribbling will allow players to beat people 1-on-1 more often. You won't be able to run rings around everyone... it'll be balanced... but you can think "I want to go there" and go there but also quickly change direction and adjust your speed.

IT'S LIKE...



PS3 | GENRE: SPORTS | RELEASE: OCTOBER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

FIFA 10

What more could they possibly add?

It may not have been as perfect as Jennifer Lopez's booty, but *FIFA* 09 was damn fine. Providing a substantial leap over *FIFA* 08 it featured improved visual pomp, free-flowing play, variety, and included the ability to have a 10-on-10 match online. So on our way to EA's *FIFA* event at Emirates stadium in London we were a touch curious. How much better could *FIFA* 10 be?

According to David Rutter, producer of both *FIFA* 09 and the new *FIFA* 10, the mantra is clear. *FIFA* 10 is all about, "building on the success of *FIFA* 09 by continuing to focus on what matters most to our fans." Surprise, surprise – that happens to be how it plays on the field.

While it's still a foetus, EA have commenced making hundreds of crucial improvements to *FIFA* 10 based on feedback they've amassed from fans. For one, dribbling has been booted out of the Stone Age. Whilst players could previously run in eight directions, they now have a full 360° of movement. EA was actually kind enough to let us have a hands-on go of their early code and we can confirm this tweak makes it easier to shuffle past lunging defenders. There have also been

substantial fixes to tackling. Remember in *FIFA* 09 where merely holding down the tackle button near the ball carrier allowed defenders to either snatch the ball or slow the attacker down? Gone. The positioning of both players is now taken into greater consideration. Leggy blokes like Cristiano Ronaldo will be able to burn away from defenders with greater ease. Which is how it should be.

All that is to say nothing of the other improvements including better trapping, AI that can suss out when a crucial gap is left open, smarter thru balls that find greater space, more accurate slide tackling, and faster Einstein-like goalkeeping.

More critically *FIFA* 10 will give the royal finger to the cheap glitch online douche bags rolled about in like pigs in sick. Yes, we're referring to hole in the game that allowed players to score immediately from the kick off thanks to a meandering goalkeeper (see YouTube if you haven't experienced this superlative phenomenon). EA and the world of *FIFA* players thank all who enjoyed it. But it won't feature in *FIFA* 10, meaning instigators can now retreat back to tracing tits off the television.

► James Ellis



"No, I'm more menacing"

WE SAY

- ↑ 360° dribbling
- ↑ Smarter AI
- ↑ Practice mode is back

OPS IS...
Hungry to score



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

DANTE'S INFERNO

Highway to Hell

Dante, Kratos, Conan, and more recently that chap with the sharp pointy claws have been tearing poor gits to shreds for quite a while now. But who's to say the barn of bodies is too full? Riffing off a lot of the tossed sinews and bones looted by the *God of War* series, EA and the developers behind *Dead Space* are shaping up to release their own bout of demon butchery with *Dante's Inferno*.

For all you poor uncultured bastards out there, *Dante's Inferno* is part of Dante's Divine Comedy, a massive poem written by Italian stallion Dante Alighieri between 1308 and 1321. Packed with imaginative embellishments on the Christian afterlife, the poem sees Dante stroll through Paradise, Purgatory, and Paradise.

As an action game set in Heaven might not be so eventful, EA wisely decided to focus on the Hell leg while taking a few



► The world's most fiery furball

artistic liberties with Dante's character. Rather than be a passive pie guzzler, the game grants the Italian wordsmith bollocks like a Clydesdale and more biff than Reg Regan. At the start of the game he even takes a page out of Jesus's book and gives Death the big one-two, scoring a huge scythe in the process.

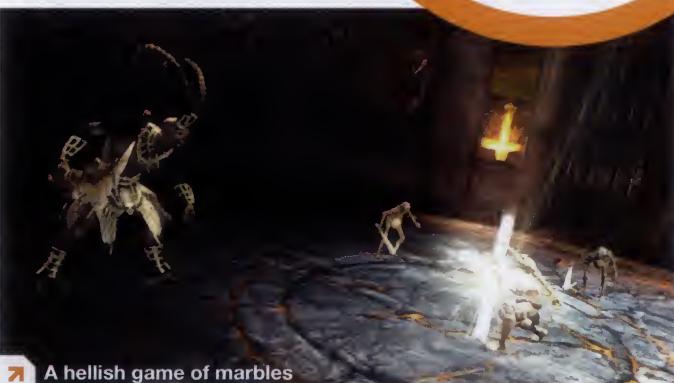
From there on out he's on a mission to bail out his babe, Beatrice, from the bowels of Hell. To do that, he, assisted by his spiritual guide Virgil, must descend through the nine circles of Hell, all of which are based on a particular sin.

We'll be honest. On our way to playtest this spud we'd already relegated it to outside odds of greatness. Fortunately it managed to pull off a surprise scythe to our innards. *Dante's Inferno* has a lot going for it.

Our demo saw us take on a swagger of evil devil dudes, hijack a huge 30-foot horned beast, then hack our way through a pack of Hell babies with razors for arms (we kid you not) before taking on King Minos of the

dead. This HUGE bastard was as blind as a pisshthead on early Sunday, so licked and smelt the bodies of the damned before proclaiming their sin and tossing them to the appropriate circle of hell. We then had to take him on, dodging his forked tongue, and slashing at his red belly.

Overall, it was up there with swallowing a mouthful of wasabi on stage. We now have a newfound respect for this slashing challenger and are eager to see if it can slay even the mighty Kratos. ▲ James Ellis



► A hellish game of marbles

IT'S LIKE...

► God of War



► Hell

HELLISH DESIGN

One of the smartest things EA did was bring on a chap called Wayne Barlowe to oversee the game's visual design. This guy is a freak! For one he was the unhinged mind behind a range of character designs for the film *Hellboy*, but secondly he's also pumped out a couple of art books packed with illustrations based on Dante's poem. Barlowe's *Inferno* and *Brushfire: Illuminations from the Inferno* even net praise from director James Cameron who said they "took us to a contorted landscape of the damned which Dante himself could never have imagined."



"...and there were all these guys in red pajamas sticking pitchforks in my butt"

WE SAY

- ↑ Stellar design
- ↑ Freaky enemies
- ↓ Dante is bland

OPS IS...
Saying its prayers





IT'S LIKE...



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: TBA | DEVELOPER: REBELLION

ROGUE WARRIOR

Keep it simple, stupid

Dick is harder than a coffin nail. We know this statement to be true because we've played *Rogue Warrior*, a new shooter based upon the exploits of Mr. Richard 'Dick' Marcinko – a real-life, ex-Navy SEAL bad arse.

For those among you who haven't heard of the legendary Dick Marcinko, here's a quick resume; Dick served two tours of Vietnam in SEAL Team Two where he won the Silver Star, four Bronze Stars, and a Navy Commendation. Basically, he was so efficient at liquidating commies' necks, the Viet Cong shit their collective Huggies and placed a massive bounty on his head.

To summarise: the North Vietnamese wanted Dick so badly, they were willing to pay for it. True story. Feel free to quote this line out of context at dinner parties.

After 'Nam, Dick was handpicked to lead SEAL Team Six. Three years later he was commissioned to build an ultra-secret infiltration team, unofficially dubbed Red

Cell. The general idea of Red Cell was to test the Navy's vulnerability to terrorism by breaking into high-security Navy locations (see 'Things Dick Has Penetrated')

Dick's official motto is "lead from the front and fight dirty" – which bespeaks of his patriotism and cunning. Mind you, he has also been known to say: "go in loaded for bear, and screw the rules of engagement" – which hints at his love of larger weaponry and his ability to 'interpret' orders to better suit what he wants to do.

Dick is an interesting character and Rebellion has rightly steered *Rogue Warrior* in the direction of a personality-driven shooter. In order to portray Mr. Marcinko, they've called in the gruff vocal talents of Mickey Rourke.

Shaun Griffiths, senior producer for Rebellion, gave us a quick demonstration of the fourth stage in *Rogue Warrior* – a level he says is a mix of 'sneak and peek' and some gung-ho action as well. The level was set in the '80s on the Korean/Russian

border and tasked Dick with tracking some anti-ballistic missiles. The missiles have been manufactured in North Korea and are in the slow process of being transported, via train, into the sweet bosom of glorious Mother Russia. Needless to say, Dick has other plans.

Essentially, *Rogue Warrior* plays a lot like *Rainbow Six Vegas*; it's primarily a first-person shooter with a cover system that auto-switches you to third-person view. We started the level perched high on a water tower, using a Dragunov sniper rifle to issue swift democratic justice to some North Korean soldiers. Once we had eliminated all available victims, we then fast-rope down to the ground.

Sneaking through the moodily lit train yard, we slapped some C4 underneath the inter-connecting train bridge and stealthily approached some patrolling soldiers. Sticking to a low lying wall we were given a cover system that offered the usual perks, plus a little something extra –

when the closest soldier wandered within range, pressing \mathbb{O} initiated a gnarly and gruesome instant kill move.

The kill moves in *Rogue Warrior* are hardcore, to say the least. The real-life Dick Marcinko is a disturbingly avid fan of large combat knives (free trivia: he has his very own range of signature pig-stickers – go and check 'em out, kids!). We watched in fascinated horror as virtual Dick went about slicing Russians in the groin and jamming the point of this knife into their eyeballs – you know, just to make doubly sure they weren't going to offer further resistance after the initial castration. Another kill move crowd favourite was when Dick seizes the barrel of the enemy's AK-47, wrenches it up underneath their chin and forces them to pull the trigger.

According to Rebellion, Dick has been instrumental in making sure these kill moves are the authentic, efficient manoeuvres that he himself would do (and presumably has done to quite a few people





THINGS DICK HAS PENETRATED

Dick is naturally adept at sliding his way into secret places. These are just some of the things Red Cell has successfully sneaked into. If that picture above could speak, it would say, "I'm under your f--king bed."



NAVAL BASES



NUCLEAR SUBMARINES



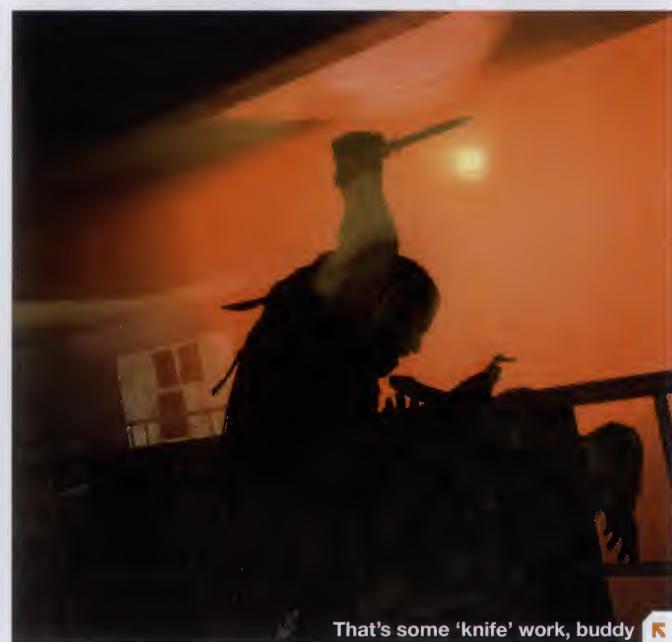
CIVILIAN AIRPORTS



AIR FORCE ONE



"Ah, my eye! I'm not supposed to get knives in it!"



That's some 'knife' work, buddy



Dick's innovative 'metal bar' massage technique

in the past). All in all, there are 25 or so to see, some are context sensitive to the environment (a la *The Bourne Conspiracy*), and you can even do them in multiplayer against your mates.

After silently butchering a whole squad of commies, the action moved indoors into a warehouse section where Dick was able to use 'targets of opportunity' to make his job easier – in this case, shooting out overhead lights, then switching to NV goggles and a silenced MP5 to murderise his way through the disorientated guards. Moving outside again we stumbled into some more troops, the alarm triggered, and the game shifted gears to become all of our favourite '80s action movies combined (complete with some radical '80s adrenaline music).

After much cover-to-cover gunplay (and Dick flagrantly firing cuss words), we

made it across the border and into the Russian end of the facility. Ivan was clearly running on different alarm system to the Koreans, because we were able to switch back to our silenced weapons and take people unawares from the shadows. Very soon Dick was slashing and headshotting up a storm whilst dropping dry one-liners.

As per usual, this little stealth holiday didn't last very long, and the crap hit the fan again (or, as Dick himself would say, 'the situation turned into a total goat f--k'). The warehouse soon began to spill over with Russian special forces, with even more arriving in a truck. Unfortunately for these newcomers, they decided to parallel park their troop truck next to a very large, very explosive barrel. A few shots at this target of opportunity earned us some very purty fireworks and a whole bunch of ragdolling Ruskies. Not long after this

event, we were able to get 'eyes on' with the train target which prompted Dick to blow his load (the C4 we planted on the bridge earlier) and we earned a 'mission accomplished'.

So, what were our thoughts after having a brief soiree with *Rogue Warrior*? We have to say that it's looking rather solid. At this early stage it isn't the most innovative game in the world, but it is clichéd in a very endearing way – it's a guilty '80s action movie pleasure, if you will. If you're looking out for a straight up, balls-to-the-wall shooter with a larger than life character – you should definitely paint this on your radar. Conversely, nothing we saw truly wowed the hell out of us; the cover system we've seen done before, and the same goes for the insta-kills. It also seemed rather linear, but we're hoping that Rebellion has a gameplay trump card it

hasn't played yet.

At any rate, Dick Marcinko has quite a magnetic personality – and his no-nonsense approach results in chaotic gun battles which cause people to die in gruesome ways. Which is why we all signed up to play games in the first place, right?  Adam Mathew

WE SAY

- ↑ '80s action-tastic
- ↑ Stabbing
- ↓ Derivative

OPS IS...
Growing a beard



IT'S LIKE...



» Tony was embarrassed when he turned up in the same costume as Chris. Guess he couldn't 'elf' it

PS3 | GENRE: RPG | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: BIOWARE

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Slash monsters, cast spells - that Potter has nothing on these guys!

I suppose we should be thankful. PlayStation 3 owners are finally scoring a BioWare game. BioWare, for those who don't know, is the best developer of RPGs in the West. And by no small margin. It has made PC gems such as *Baldur's Gate* and *Neverwinter Nights*, as well as colossal Xbox releases like *Jade Empire*, *Mass Effect*, and *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic*. That's great and dandy, apart from the fact that it's released bugger all for PlayStation. Until now.

Marking its first PlayStation 3 title, *Dragon Age: Origins* is a fantasy medieval RPG quest touted as the spiritual successor to *Baldur's Gate*. A nasty mage named Uldred is causing beef across the land and it's up to players to deliver unto him a right walloping.

Unlike the more mainstream-friendly *Mass Effect*, *Dragon Age: Origins* is old school in how it plays. Combat relies on gamers stopping time and teeing up squad attacks and strategies, and there's a huge emphasis on conversations with NPCs.

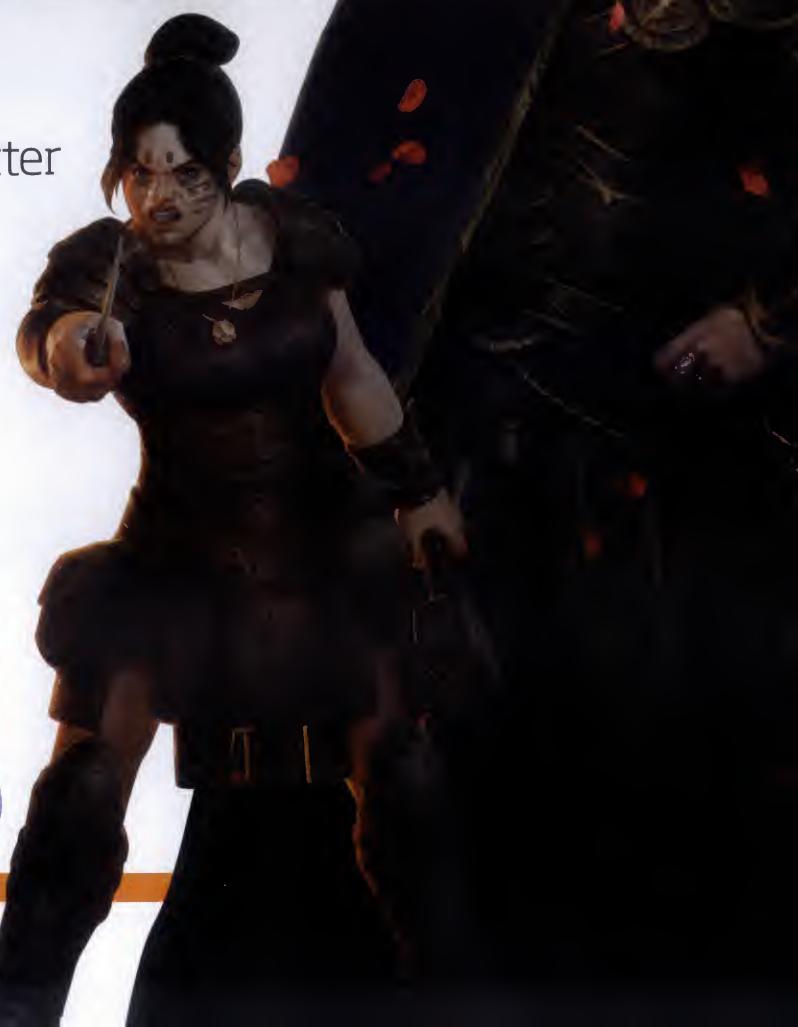
On one hand this serves to draw players further into the game's strategy and story, but it may also put off punters currently surviving on a diet of *Killzone 2* and *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

Mitigating this might be BioWare's promise of a sizzle injection. Apparently *Dragon Age: Origins* will be packed with lust, violence, and betrayal. Will we see kinky action as 360 players did in *Mass Effect*? More importantly will that be enough to lure in new gamers to this layered and rewarding genre?  **James Ellis**

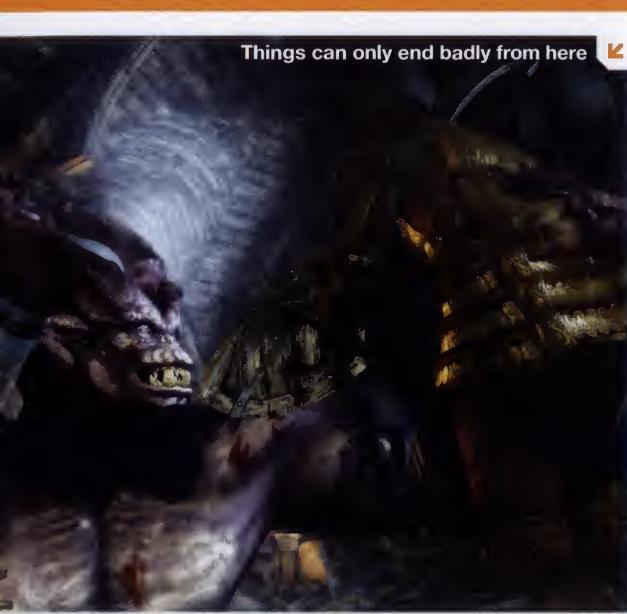
WE SAY

- ↑ A BioWare RPG!
- ↑ Choices aplenty
- ↓ Not *Mass Effect*

OPS IS...
Waiting to see



Things can only end badly from here



"Hey, two more and we could be the Olympics"

Seatbelts: overrated

PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: TBA | DEVELOPER: A2M

WET

A little H2-oh yeeeahh...

Here's an interesting tidbit: according to Bethesda its forthcoming title, *WET*, is a game that doesn't rely on sex to sell itself. Here's a quick recap for those of you not paying attention: the game's called *WET*, you play as gun-totting babe who regularly goes legs akimbo in skin-tight leather pants, and has a pert polygon count upstairs.

But this ISN'T tits and arse marketing.

Doesn't quite compute, does it?

We were told at a recent unveiling event in London that the star of *WET*, the gorgeous Ms. Rubi Malone, isn't the protagonist simply to get male punters percolating in the nether regions.

We don't exactly agree, but we will say that *WET* is shaping up to be a really great game in its own right. *WET* doesn't need jubbies and a leather encased bubble butt to make it an attractive game – it has visceral grindhouse gunplay and cool factor out the yin yang to do that.

But come on, people. Let's call a sexy spade a sexy spade. Your average male gamer (aged 13 to dead) will scoop *WET* up from the shelf because there is a smokin' hot chick on the cover and in the screenshots there are people getting shot in really, really creative ways.

More soon. ▶ Clint McCredie



Jetpack-ing heat

PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: LATE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

DARK VOID

Rocket to me

Set to seamlessly combine free flight, airborne combat and ground skirmishes comes Capcom's next third-person action adventure involving the Bermuda triangle, a jetpack and the legend of Nikolai Tesla. We went hands-on with this new rocketeer for a whole level, swooping through a canyon, taking out flying saucers and AA guns before battling cranky, self-destructing robots in a mysterious universe known as The Void that Will, a cargo pilot, has found himself in.

That Will bloke? That's you. The story of escaping The Void and getting everyone else out will be driven by the exploits of Will and his uncanny jetpack, handily cobbled together by Nikolai Tesla who happens to be in The Void too. It draws parallels to *Iron Man* but *Dark Void* promises to be better. Than the game, at least.

The freedom of darting about the skies as a man missile is obvious, and the jetpack offers helicopter-like agility with plane-like speed. Metal, however, is stronger than meat so it makes sense to hijack an enemy craft and take out more punishing foes. Dropping out of the air and landing on foot starts a new type of offensive. Will's pretty handy with any weapon he can lay his hands on, and as we start to take out the bad guys the jet pack comes back into play, utilising a handy double jump, and must be used to overcome the indoor structures. *Dark Void*'s single player only, so we're interested in seeing how the character of Will and his story is going to turn this from being just another blast-a-thon into a compelling narrative. ▶ Paul Taylor

INCOMING

Mafia II



► Approximately eight seconds before things go horribly wrong



PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: SUMMER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K | DEVELOPER: 2K CZECH

MAFIA II

Just when you thought you were out

The first *Mafia* was released when the open-world market wasn't saturated by *Saints Row*, *Godfather* et al. It packed a few cool gameplay mechanics that we haven't seen since, such as being fined rather than arrested for low-level misdemeanours, and the 1920s setting was a great period to experience organised crime. The sequel, however, is tasked with working hard to distinguish itself and from what we've witnessed *Mafia II* looks well-formed with the potential to do just that.

The game spans 10 years in the life of Vito Scaletta, an Italian-American returning home to Empire City from WWII in 1944. Whilst Empire City's fictional, modelled on a mix of New York city and San Francisco, the style of the game captures that time-frame, and we're anticipating witnessing subtle changes in fashion and trends represented in the gameworld. It feels very cinematic with well-represented characters, convincing voice acting and polished

animation. In the mission we saw, Vito and his crew went undercover in a hotel to try and blow up an opposing mob boss with a low-tech bomb. In a period before remote detonation they had to trigger the explosive manually and hoisted themselves down the side of the building in a window washer's gondola to make the wires live. The pacing and maturity of the game sets it apart from the bulk of other sandboxes out there – we expect this to be big. ▶ Paul Taylor

IT'S LIKE...

► Mafia



► Nice shoes



WE SAY

- ↑ Looks great
- ↑ Sounds great
- ↓ Different enough?

OPS IS...
in the Family





Take that, gate



▲ Roughly translates to "I am the Ginger Ninja". We think

PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: TBA 2009

DISTRIBUTOR: TBC

DEVELOPER: SNK PLAYMORE

KING OF FIGHTERS XII

Hail to the King, baby!

The King of Fighters series comes across as "the average looker with a lot of personality" in the "cave each other's heads in" genre, and kind of gets the short end of the stick, fading into the shadows against the likes of the *Tekken* and *Soulcalibur* juggernauts. We're starting to sense a strange disturbance in the Force as it nears its 15-year anniversary.

The series has always distanced itself from the competition with the unique three-on-three tag team format, even in arcade modes, giving you ample opportunity to go through and sample the entire roster and find the fighters that best suit you pretty quickly. There's

an element of strategy involved, as even on the easiest setting your adversaries are no pushovers. Strikes need to be well timed and executed to perfection, or you'll reap the reward of a fist to the face, boyo, followed by any number of bone crunching nastiness.

Stylistically, it's getting a revamp, with all hand drawn 2D characters and backgrounds reinforcing the cartoon/anime feel, as opposed to the 3D trimmings we've seen used so often recently. It's a fresh look and a throwback at the same time, giving it a flavour all of its own.

Even though it's early days, *KOF XII* is cutting a different path from its peers, but will this gamble pay off with great success? Only time will tell. ▲ **Dave Kozicki**



▲ "Lick my glove: it tastes like pain!"

PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

RELEASE: APRIL 2009

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

Make Mike Tyson swallow his mouthguard

Boxing. It's the sport of bronze-legged gods, slobbering behemoths, Don King. While the history of the real sport has its ups and downs, its video game brother has never looked as menacing. We've played *Fight Night Round 4*. And *Fight Night Round 4* is one mean-ass-bitch-of-a-knuckle-bustin' gun. EA could've been lazy, could've regurgitated up the previous *Fight Night* with new pugilists and a few modes. But that's not how the new EA roll. This new iteration is substantially better.

It comes down to the boxing. Whereas in *Round 3* combos were stifled, with strikes only commencing after the preceding blow had finished, *Round 4* allows for more realistic flurries. Jab two to the head, then a swinging hook to the body in smooth, quick time. It

works. It's responsive.

Additionally, different fighters now box differently – as they should. We jumped in the ring to witness the drawcard event as illustrated on *Round 4*'s upcoming cover: Muhammad Ali versus 'Iron' Mike Tyson. The winning strategy for each is markedly different. Ali's long reach relegates him to being an outside fighter. Throw jabs, back away, move, look for an opportunity to wear the opponent down, then SHAZAM. Hit 'em with a hook. Tyson works his pain from the inside. Whereas in *Round 3* there was an invisible barrier preventing players from getting close, Tyson can now freely get in close to try and smash the opponent's head off.

It's bloody fantastic and we can't wait to get our hands on the finished product. ▲ **James Ellis**

PSP | GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: JUNE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: HARMONIX/BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT

ROCK BAND UNPLUGGED

There's nothing acoustic about it

One would be forgiven for thinking the crazy wave of music games is the new generational opium. They're huge on PlayStation 3, huge on Xbox, huge on everything. With Activision servicing the Nintendo DS with its portable version of *Guitar Hero On Tour* it was inevitable a pocket-sized music game

eventually debut on the PSP. But it's not *Guitar Hero* that's arrived here first, but EA's amp destroyer.

We recently got to go hands on with this up at EA's European showcase in London and the first thing worth pointing out is that it doesn't use any sort of fancy arse peripheral that sees you scratch the crap out of the PSP screen like a cat trying to escape a sinking glass box. *Rock Band Unplugged* revolves around hitting notes on a music highway – sure – but all inputs are done via the game's standard buttons.

Interestingly enough, by default each song still features an entire band's worth of tracks to play with the game charging players to skip to a new instrument after each perfect phrase. Sounds clunky? To be honest, it is a bit. One moment we were walking the bass line to 'Message In a Bottle', the next we were trying to squeeze out the song's scrambled guitar work. It used to work back with *Amplitude* and *Frequency*, but now we're not quite as sure. Fortunately other included modes allow players to pick an instrument track and stick with it for the entire song.

At least the song list for the game is strong, made up of tracks from past *Rock*

Band releases, nine exclusive tracks, and 10 that can be exclusively downloaded.

The nine exclusives are Audioslave's 'Gasoline', Black Tide's 'Show Me the Way', Freezepop's 'Less Talk More Rokk', 3 Doors Down's 'Kryptonite', Alice in Chains' 'Would?', Blink 182's 'What's My Age Again', Jackson 5's 'ABC', Tenacious D's 'Rock Your Socks' and AFI's 'Miss Murder'. These will be "exclusive to *Rock Band Unplugged* for a limited time", meaning you can bet your left one they'll appear on the Rock Store for PS3 consumption before too long. The rest of the tracks, including the ones that are already slated for DLC are already available on the the Rock

platform.  **James Ellis**

IT'S LIKE...



 **Amplitude**



 **Rock**

WE SAY

-  **Great music selection**
-  **Takes time to adjust**
-  **Skipping tracks?**

OPS IS...
Frankly unsure





Ahhh, 'Unplugged' - no wires. PSP... yeah, we get it.



Switch between tracks, like Frequency



"I hate my father, and I hate my life. I love hair gel though"



PSP | GENRE: FIGHTING | RELEASE: MID 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

FATE: UNLIMITED CODES

Well, we suppose it was bound to happen

Right, until Street Fighter is released on the PSP outside of a Capcom 'retro' disc, there's only Tekken to rely on for pocket fighters. Cue Fate. Sure, it'd be easy to dismiss this on grounds of unfamiliarity, as only anime fanatics will have a clue what this is about. To that end, we could go into the story but Fate is a robust brawler, blessed with instant playability and a raft of characters that are varied in design and attack if a little limited in number. The biffo is what should draw you in.

Double taps matched with a light, medium or heavy attack, and quarter circles for specials, ease the burden of needing to enter thumb-punishing commands. Auto

block makes it simpler though not dumb as you're called on for a Reflect Guard, which we didn't quite master. It's also a haven for juggles, with the choice of using character-specific weapons or just fists and feet. The art style is faithful to the novel; big, bright, and the characters aren't clones of one another, loving a good long chat between matches about what they're doing and why, which, honestly, we could do without. We played it in single player only, and were itching to try it out ad-hoc. Unfortunately, it won't take advantage of playing over Wi-Fi. Still, this is a dark horse. It's download only, so we just hope it doesn't get overlooked. Even at this stage, Fate is well worth trying out.  Paul Taylor



Upskirts are rarely this easy

PSP | GENRE: FIGHTING | RELEASE: LATE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI

TEKKEN 6

Prepare for a pint-sized fistin'!

After the impressive staying power of *Tekken 5 Dark Resurrection*, the series has established itself as master of the brew-ha-ha on just about any platform. Well hold on to your jocks kiddies, cause you ain't seen nuthin' yet! *Tekken 6* is looking to trump all that stood before it.

Though details are scarcer than a dinosaur turd, we've managed to run a Vulcan mind meld on some unsuspecting Atari staff to glean these little nuggets of info. Firstly, it's sporting the largest roster so far; with in excess of 40 playable characters comprised of the now standardised mix of old school faves and latest

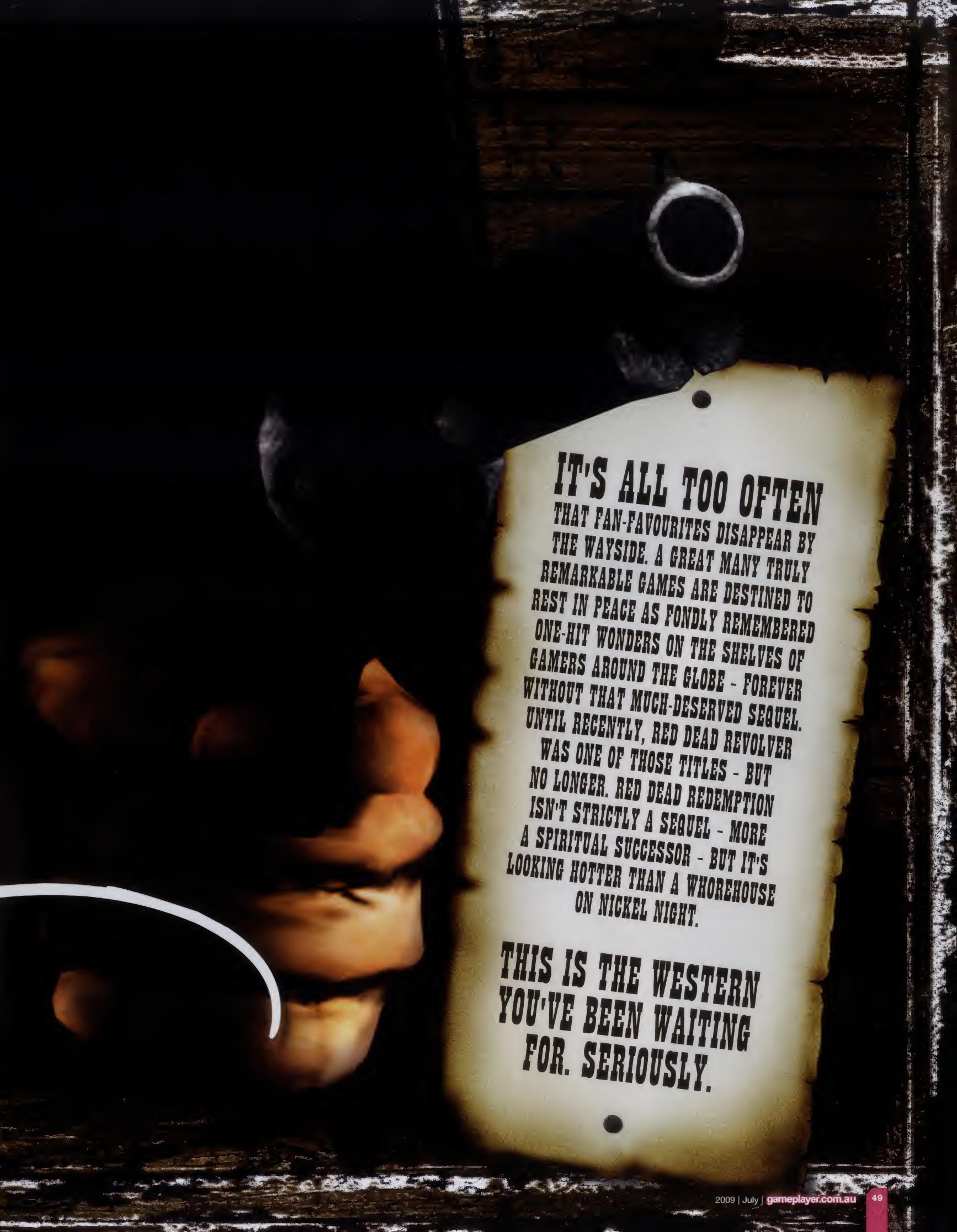
greatest additions. But what really gets us juiced is the character creation option, which we're sure will lead to some seriously 'roided up behemoths and scantily clad sex-pots.

The hits don't stop there, though. Taking a leaf out of *DOA's* book, destructible environments have been introduced, triggered by sending your opponent through a door/wall/over an edge, or semi-scripted explosions by outside parties. The King of Iron Fist is back and it's not pulling any punches. We're salivating like a pack of rabid dogs to get our mitts on this bad boy.  Dave Kozicki

A close-up, low-angle shot of a man's face, showing a beard and mustache, looking intensely at the viewer.

Words: Luke Reilly

REDEEMING GRACE



IT'S ALL TOO OFTEN

THAT FAN-FAVOURITES DISAPPEAR BY THE WAYSIDE. A GREAT MANY TRULY REMARKABLE GAMES ARE DESTINED TO REST IN PEACE AS FONDLY REMEMBERED ONE-HIT WONDERS ON THE SHELVES OF GAMERS AROUND THE GLOBE - FOREVER WITHOUT THAT MUCH-DESERVED SEQUEL.

UNTIL RECENTLY, RED DEAD REVOLVER WAS ONE OF THOSE TITLES - BUT NO LONGER. RED DEAD REDEMPTION ISN'T STRICTLY A SEQUEL - MORE A SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR - BUT IT'S LOOKING HOTTER THAN A WHOREHOUSE ON NICKEL NIGHT.

THIS IS THE WESTERN YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. SERIOUSLY.

R“This is so much larger than *GTA IV* it isn’t funny,” adds a Rockstar spokesperson, part of the way through our presentation with *Red Dead Redemption*. It’s a none-too insignificant claim. *GTA IV* is a big game, no doubt, but what impresses is the attention to detail – and the amount of said detail – packed into each square metre. Take the donk toiling away under the hood of *GTA IV* and apply it to a far less dense and vertical environment and suddenly you’re looking at a game that matches *GTA IV* for the fine, deliberate details but dwarfs it in size.

And what part of that isn’t slap-you-in-the-teeth awesome?

DESERVE'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH IT

Rockstar San Diego (formerly Angel Studios) has been a champion of open-world titles for some time. As Angel Studios it was responsible for *Midtown Madness* and its sequel on PC, a pioneering open-world racer. As Rockstar San Diego it crafted both the *Midnight Club* and *Smuggler's Run* series. The original *Red Dead Revolver* was one of its titles too.

It's worth remembering that Rockstar San Diego also built the Rockstar Advanced Game Engine, or, RAGE. *GTA IV* may currently be RAGE's greatest showcase, but *Red Dead Redemption* is really the game it was built for.

Red Dead Redemption has been in development for some time too, even before *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*. Way back at E3 2005 Rockstar quietly released a mysterious tech trailer featuring an anonymous horseman trotting about some dusty locales. The trailer, simply dubbed 'Old West Project', was assumed by many to be *Red Dead Revolver* 2. We weren't entirely convinced, anticipating something slightly different – or somewhat of a reboot. The truth appears to be somewhere in between. Still, there's little doubt the project has been in gestation for many years, and equally little the game will be in apple pie order when it arrives.

Rockstar doesn't do anything by halves.

ONE BASTARD GOES IN, ANOTHER BASTARD COMES OUT

Set around 50 years after the events of the first game, *Red Dead Redemption* is an entirely different beast from its predecessor. *Red Dead Revolver* was a linear homage to the Spaghetti Western, packed with shamelessly stereotypical characters. It was light entertainment spiced up with some theatrical ultra-violence. It was good too, but *Red Dead Redemption* is something else. It's far more aligned with the modern Western; those that have evolved from the more cynical Westerns that began to find their way into cinemas during and after the Vietnam War. If *Red Dead Redemption* were a film, and Rockstar has never been shy about their cinematic influences, it would be what's known as a late Western – like *The Wild Bunch*, *The Shootist*

or *The Professionals*. Towards the end of the first decade of the 20th Century outlaws had become almost anachronisms in a new age as the rise of industrialisation, and the growing authority of the federal government, had begun to crush the West. The late Western regards the coming of civilisation as a problem rather than a change for good. Law and order is seen as the legitimised power of the establishment, as suddenly the freedom the West offered is threatened by 'the man'.

Late in the first decade of the 1900s the US was moving forward at a rapid pace. The Wright Brothers took to the air in 1903, the same year Henry Ford started putting fat cats into Model A Fords (the eponymous Model T came in 1908). Telephones. Milkmen. The West was quickly becoming a speedbump on Progress Boulevard. There was very little room in this new environment for a lawless frontier full of murderers, cattle rustlers and various other dogkickers. The West

had been won, and it was going out with a whimper. It's this pivotal time *Red Dead Redemption* uses as its dramatic backdrop.

John Marston, a partially reformed outlaw who has settled down with his family after many years in a notoriously brutal gang, is the leading man in *Red Dead Redemption*. Three years into his 'retirement' John's life is torn asunder when agents from The Bureau arrive at his doorstep. These feds from the Bureau of Investigation (formed in 1908, it would go on to become what we know now as the FBI) deliver Marston a terrible ultimatum, and this provocation is the catalyst for *Red Dead Redemption*'s dark and epic narrative. Working under the instruction of the government, The Bureau proves to be just as ruthless, lawless and evil as the outlaws they've been tasked with taking down. In *Red Dead Redemption* the line between good and evil and right and wrong isn't just blurry – it has vanished entirely.

But enough backstory. →

“Red Dead Redemption is an entirely different beast from its predecessor”



A HORSE IS A HORSE

Your primary modes of transport in *Red Dead Redemption* are horses. You'll be able to learn the general attributes of the horses available in the game from their breed and the condition – some will be faster, some will have better stamina, and so on. Their behaviour will also vary – they can get spooked, they'll get restless if you spur them too often, and they can display degrees of loyalty. A horse that's familiar with you will be less of a handful than a horse you've stolen, or a wild horse you've lassoed from the plains. All that aside, we're still hanging out for some vintage motoring. It's certainly not out of the question, anyway.

“It's all equal or greater to that which was achieved in GTAIV”

BETTER RED THAN DEAD

Red Dead Revolver boasted a neat slow-motion system of dispatching no-gooders called Dead Eye, back before slow motion became about as pointless as a one-legged man in an arse-kicking contest. As one of the few connections between the two titles, Dead Eye has returned – but this time you can use it in two different ways. The first is available with any weapon you're packing and enables you to slow down time, giving you precious extra seconds to make sure your aim is true and make the kind of shots a truly feared gunslinger could do with his eyes closed and his pecker in the nearest saloon strumpet. The other way is exclusive to pistols and allows you to slow down time in order to lay down multiple targets – as many as you have bullets in the chambers – then fan the hammer automatically until they're all exhausted. Each very useful if you couldn't hit a bull in the behind with a handful of banjos.

YOU SKIN THAT SMOKE WAGON AND WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

The highest praise we can heap upon *Red Dead Redemption* as this point is that it resembles its half-brother *GTAIV* in a remarkable number of ways. A lot of this can be attributed to the shared DNA between the two titles. This will likely prove to be a real trouser-raiser for at least a sizable slice of the 13 million punters who've gobbled up *GTAIV* over the past 12 months or so.

Marston's swagger, the way he slides into cover and looses barrages of lead plumbs towards deserving scumbags, the visual style, the pitch-perfect atmosphere – even at this stage it's all equal or greater to that which was achieved in *GTAIV*.

From the way the tumbleweeds amble by to the ping of ricochetting bullets, countless barely noticeable details are weaved into a rich tapestry of audio visual extravagance in the same fashion as Rockstar's modern day crime epic. The only difference between these two games is a century of US history – beyond that they appear very closely related.

We were privy to three mission examples in our demo. The first was a prisoner exchange that goes sour. When a friend of Marston named Bonnie is

taken captive by a gang of crims led by Norman Deek, Deek uses her as a bargaining chip to initiate a hostage trade. The mission begins on the outskirts of town, with Marston leading a bound man into town at gunpoint, followed by three associates with rifles at the ready. After a brief Mexican standoff the situation breaks down into a running gunfight as Marston and his men pick their way through the town. NaturalMotion's Euphoria engine is hard at work here as the baddies Marston beefs topple from rooftops and slam into the dust, hats spiralling away from their lifeless bodies. Like we mentioned, Marston has the same cover skills as Niko – but he can also take cover behind moving things like wagons, and animal corpses. If Seabiscuit takes a stray one in the crossfire and keels over in the street, you'll be able to avoid eating a lead salad by ducking behind the expired equine.

On reaching the centre of town he's met with Bonnie noosed-up and teetering on a stool, before a gang member kicks it away, giving Marston only a brief time limit to save her.

The second mission was a typical on-rails mission with Marston riding shotgun on a stage after one of his associates, a shady tinker, has enraged some equally shady locals with his dodgy goods. Marston is guilty by association and must defend himself and the merchant from these guys.





With a little Dead Eye, Marston is able to deal with the pursuing outlaws by either shooting them off their saddles or taking out the horses themselves.

Mission three saw Marston team up with de Santo, a member of the Mexican military, and a handful of his best men to defend the mail train from a mob of marauders. As Marston and the others ride alongside the train they'll come across waiting ambushes and groups of spook-mask wearing bandits on horseback. Marston, de Santo and crew must keep up with the train while defending it. According to our Rockstar spokesperson, you could choose to board the train and mount your defence there if you wished.

ONE TWITCH AND YOU'RE IN HELL

Red Dead Redemption's world isn't just big, it's impressively dynamic – even more so than *GTAIV*. There's obviously far less going on per square kilometre in the wide open spaces of *Red Dead Redemption*, but that makes the little touches all the more noticeable. Rockstar is dubbing these completely random encounters 'procedural events', and they vary wildly. Trotting down a dirt trail we heard whooping, hollering and gunfire up ahead. Rounding the bend we spotted a posse of men galloping towards us, six abreast, firing into the air and leaving puffs of cordite hanging behind them. As

they sped past, however, we noted they were dragging a body – tied at the ankles – through the desert. There could've been a bounty on the bloke, or the riders could've been a liquored-up lynch mob. We didn't interfere, although you can if you want. Regardless, we found the unfortunate victim's hat a short distance away. Further down the road we spotted a couple of Marshals on horseback chasing an armed man. You could choose a side in this case, and hope the relevant party will offer you some kind of reward – but not all the people you meet, or help, can be trusted. You'll find stage coaches winding their way across the plains and prairies. You'll spot trains chugging down the lines spewing steam and smoke, which certainly aren't immune to train robbers or gangs of banditos. Stand close enough to the trains and you'll note the individual people inside the carriages. You'll come across ambushes too – we were nearly undone by a barely-dressed damsel in distress claiming she was having wagon trouble when a crew of road agents burst out from behind the allegedly broken-down stage and began blasting.

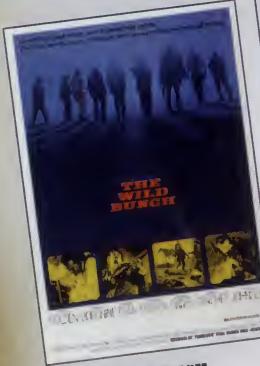
There truly is no shortage of the kind of things you'll notice. The world of *Red Dead Redemption* is also home to coyotes, cougars, wild horses, armadillos, wolves, snakes, rabbits and bears, amongst others, and they all interact with each other. Predators will prey on weaker species, humans included. It certainly won't be out of the question to come across a pack of coyotes munging on the corpse of a recently departed ➤

LEAVE THE BOTTLE

There'll be plenty of opportunities for making cash in towns, off mission. Aside from selling the pelts of animals you've hunted and skinned you can engage in various wagers. During our brief visit to one of *Red Dead Redemption*'s small towns we were shown one minigame, Five Finger Fillet. You place a wager on your ability to tap your knife into the table between your fingers without stabbing yourself. It's a rhythm and timing based minigame, so the faster you go the greater the chance to do yourself some real damage. On our way through the saloon, however, we spotted an option to 'Play Drinking'. Can you get blind drunk and stagger out into town with a gutful of whiskey, a la *GTAIV*? We'd be surprised if you couldn't.

Best Western

COMPULSORY VIEWING TO GET IN THE MOOD



THE WILD BUNCH

1969

Best line

Pike Bishop: A hell of a lot of people, Dutch, just can't stand to be wrong.



TOMBSTONE

1993

Best line

Doc Holiday: I'm your huckleberry...



OPEN RANGE

2003

Best line

Charley Waite: Men are gonna get killed here today, Sue, and I'm gonna kill 'em.



UNFORGIVEN

1992

Best line

Will Munny: It's a hell of a thing, killing a man. Take away all he's got and all he's ever gonna have.

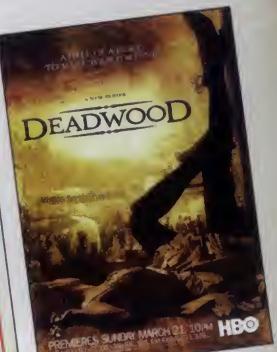


THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

1966

Best line

Man With No Name: You see, in this world there's two kinds of people, my friend: those with loaded guns and those who dig. You dig.



DEADWOOD (TV)

2004-2006

Best line

Al Swearengen: If I bleat when I speak it's because I just got f--kin' fleeced.



desperado. Vultures, too, will circle above shootouts hoping to score some fresh meat. Everything with a heartbeat runs on the Euphoria engine, the biomechanical AI that made Liberty City's population the most authentically animated supply of innocent bystanders ever – so be excited. PETA's gonna be pissed.

DON'T PISS DOWN MY BACK AND TELL ME IT'S RAININ'!

There's a lot that remains a mystery about the massively ambitious and hugely impressive *Red Dead Redemption*. What of multiplayer, for instance? Rockstar is not revealing details yet, but we can imagine there have been a number of lessons gleaned from *GTAIV*'s excellent multiplayer. Online posses, showdowns and such seem likely. What of weather effects? There's a full day/night cycle – and we caught a quick glimpse of how the West looks late at night (no pollution

and few clouds means the black sky is speckled with thousands of visible stars) – but we couldn't get any confirmation of lightning storms rolling across the vast spaces. *GTAIV* showed us RAGE could do wild weather, however, so we feel it's probably a given.

We only saw a few very thin slices of the available environment too. There are three areas in the game, all connected and each very large on their own – the Frontier, the Plains and Mexico. It almost goes without saying that there are no loading times as you travel throughout the world. Each area has its own unique characteristics, and they contain varying degrees of civilisation – from virtually abandoned shantytowns and cattle ranches, to Mexican villages and organised urban hubs. We're certainly wondering just how organised these urban hubs are, and how much they'll clash with the wide-open countryside, but it's all speculation at this point.

By the time *Red Dead Redemption* is released, it'll be the culmination of

18 extra months of honing RAGE after *GTAIV*. Everything about it screams supreme craftsmanship, from the musculature of the horses to the gold chain on Marston's going-out clobber. Like *GTAIV*, no detail is too small.

FILL YOUR HANDS YOU SON OF A BITCH!

2005's *GUN* didn't exactly look like it'd been rode hard and put up wet, but it was too short and surprisingly small. If it did one thing it whetted our appetites for a truly epic open-world Western with Clint Eastwood attitude and lofty production values. Make no mistake, *Red Dead Redemption* is on track to be just that huckleberry.

We don't know what it is about Westerns that resonates so well with us. Despite being intricately associated with a very specific time and place within few decades of American history, Westerns are popular both within and outside of the US. Perhaps it's because the themes of revenge and redemption are universal. In Australia and the UK, at least, perhaps it's because we're equally fascinated with criminals. Australian bushrangers and British highwaymen are roughly analogous to the outlaws of the Old West. In Australia Ned Kelly is a folklore hero, even though he was a copkiller. Perhaps we're all still a little envious of the freedom the Wild West offered, even though it generally came at a high price.

Perhaps we've just watched *Tombstone* a few too many times. Whatever the reason, *Red Dead Redemption* is one Grand Theft Western we can't wait to wrangle. ▶

“Vultures, too,
will circle above
shootouts hopin'
to score some
fresh meat”

Words: Luke Reilly

BORN TO RIDE

OPS chats to the Birdman about the upcoming *Tony Hawk RIDE*, being a dad and *Police Academy 4*...

OPS: Okay, well, not only do you have 10 games with your name on it, you've got a rollercoaster too...

Tony Hawk: [laughs]

OPS: Four rollercoasters, actually. Is that right?

TH: Yeah, yeah.

OPS: Are you the coolest dad ever?

TH: [laughs] I don't know, well, that's a complicated question. Um, I guess sometimes I am because we get these amazing opportunities for our family but then other times I have to travel so much to make all those actually work – it's hard on family life when you're constantly on the move like that – but my kids appreciate it, they get to go to the Nickelodeon Awards, the last time we went on tour you're going to all these Six Flags [amusement parks] – that's kinda cool.

OPS: How would you define yourself as a gamer?

TH: I would say, at this point in my life, more a casual gamer. It's hard to say, because my kids play a lot of games and a lot of times I have to come and finish stuff for them, so I've become more like a very experienced kid-oriented gamer. How's that? [laughs]

OPS: A solver of problems...

TH: Yeah, like all the *Star Wars*, all the LEGO games – obviously *Guitar Hero*.

OPS: Just for some insight, how instrumental are you in the development of your games, particularly the upcoming one?

TH: Well, the upcoming one I've been the MOST involved with, more so than our last few games, because it's a whole new idea, a whole new learning process. Creating a game based on a peripheral, as much as a peripheral based on a game, is neat because you can't just design the game and expect the board to work with it, you have to develop it at the same time and figure out what is possible. I actually got quite a bit active.



▲ The Attack of the 20 Storey-Tall Skater

OPS: Given that this is a peripheral-based game, we don't know whether you've noticed, but quite a few people have injured themselves using things like the Nintendo Wii, are you conscious about that when making this game? Is it idiot proof? Is anything idiot proof?

TH: [laughs] Well, obviously there is a, I don't wanna say risk...

OPS: [laughs]

TH: ...but there's always a chance that if you're doing something physical something could happen – but we've put different difficulty levels on the game so that you don't have to know how to do an ollie per se, or the motion for a kickflip if you wanna play this game – you can start off on the basics and just get the turning down. My best advice is to have a very clear area, don't be playing next to the china cabinet.

OPS: Or perhaps the African spear collection...

TH: Yeah.

OPS: Activision had the skating genre stitched up for so long until *Skate* came out to significant critical and commercial success. Was the year off, the first year without a *Tony Hawk* title for eight or nine years, worth it?

TH: Yeah, it's funny, it was a year off from releasing a console game, but for me it was the busiest year of making games because that was the beginning process. You know, we started this pretty much as soon as we released *Proving Ground*. Over the last year it's just been development, so it's not like we sat back and took a year off necessarily, we needed two years to make this for sure. We were starting from scratch; it's not like we were using the same engine necessarily. You're right, *Skate* kinda divided the market for our game and for skate-based games, as a skating simulation, so it was time to change it up.

OPS: So when *Skate* came around and changed things, were you almost forced to switch it up?

TH: Yeah, I think we were at a point in time though that you want to do something

different, and working with this game, button-control schemes, it was getting to be like *Guitar Hero* on a controller. So we lost something. If it gets too complicated you lose sight of the actual game that's happening and the connection to skating. So I feel like this game is as close as you can possibly get to real skating.

OPS: What's your personal favourite from your titles?

TH: Well, I loved our last one. I loved all of them, because I feel like we've always incorporated the best of the previous game into the last one that we did, so with *Proving Ground* we did have all the best of the previous games, with some added new features. You know, I guess if I had to have a soft spot it'd probably be *Pro Skater 2*, because I've always loved the downhill jam level, to this day. That was 2, right? [laughs]

OPS: What about your kids, do they have a favourite?

TH: Well, they really got into playing videogames around about the time



Staying on the board: you're doing it wrong



RIDING HIGH

Robomodo is an independent, Chicago-based development studio formed back in January 2008 by several members of the then recently defunct EA Chicago. In fact, around 85 percent of the staff came from EA Chicago. Robomodo has been handed development duties for *Tony Hawk RIDE*, which could be a very positive thing. Neversoft, after all, had been the caretaker of the series for nigh on 10 years – a fresh set of eager eyes may do the series a world of good. We remain sceptical about how much depth you'll be able to squeeze out of a board peripheral (how do you do a Christ Air, for instance? And how do you push without falling over, or footplanting yourself into your TV?) but as solutions go to the gauntlet thrown down by *Skate* – and it's killer sequel – it is a bold one.



American Wasteland came out, so they really enjoyed playing that game and seeing all the Californian locations they were familiar with. And they loved dressing me, my character, up in ridiculous costumes and making me run around, that was their favourite thing to do.

OPS: Do they offer much challenge? Can they beat you at being Tony Hawk?

TH: No. No, I can hold my own. [laughs]

OPS: 20 years ago you were a stunt double on *Police Academy 4*, could you have imagined back then you'd have a videogame empire like this?

TH: Certainly not then, no. I actually got fired from that job, because I was too tall to double David Spade. But no, it's been amazing. I feel like I've worked really hard at it, I wouldn't say it fell upon me. During the dead times and more challenging times for skating popularity it was hard, it was really hard to make a living and have a family. I always hoped it would come back, but I never thought that having a videogame would propel it through the roof.



“I actually got fired from that job, because I was too tall to double David Spade”

METAL AND METAL

Words: James Ellis

Sequelitis has a cure, and that cure is Brütal Legend. Part adventure, part open-world action, part posse-based strategy, it's a fresh mix of metal lovin' created by guru game master Tim Schafer. So throw on the black jeans and blacker eyeliner. And make no mistake: this will rock you.

The eternally tenacious Jack Black romps through a heavy metal album cover, thwarting a demonic regime with a Nordic metal band that attacks with the power of rock. That's the best – perhaps the only – way to describe EA's upcoming black-leather-jacket action quest, *Brütal Legend*. At first glance it'd be tempting to jot it down as another third-person open-world action blast. But that's not doing it justice. Not at all.

OPS was invited to head over to London, England, for EA's latest bout of product pimping. While there was superb quality all round, the product we were most interested in was *Brütal Legend*. Partly because it sounds so different, but mostly because the man behind it is an industry legend: master game designer, Tim Schafer.

Who? He made not have reached the same status as Hideo Kojima yet, but we're confident this snappy-lipped yank is on the verge of being recognised as a video game auteur and will be bombarded with posted panties from Korean hombags. Schafer has been around for an age, but his portfolio, with the exception of the PlayStation 2's *Psychonauts*, is made up of PC adventure quests fans describe with terms like peerless, classic, and brilliant (see 'Schafer's Handiwork'). That might suggest *Brütal Legend*, an action

game, is beyond Schafer's scope and that he's cashing in on console players with short attention spans. But this couldn't be further from the truth.

"We've been working on it (*Brütal Legend*) for the past four years, and I think I've been dreaming about it since I was 14 years old," says Schafer.

"I've always loved heavy metal and hard rock, not just because of the power of the music but because of the epic storytelling, and the lyrics, and insane graphics on the album covers. They'd have a six-legged mastodon with lightning tusks fighting a panther shooting laser beams out of its eyes. They didn't worry about whether these two creatures went together in the mythology. It's like 'no, it's just brutal and cool and awesome'. I always thought that would be a great thing to make an entire world out of, then fall into and run around."

We follow Schafer into a back-pass room where he'll show a demo of the game in action. Almost for laughs, he kicks things off with background on the story and character.

Brütal Legend chump Eddie Riggs is the world's greatest roadie. A backstage MacGyver, he can fix any amplifier, tune any guitar, and move any lead man from a babe-packed Jacuzzi onto a stage. But when he accidentally cuts himself during

a gig and bleeds onto his ornamental belt buckle, he unleashes a flaming chrome dragon that tears a hole in the fabric of space and time, sucking Eddie back thousands of years to an ancient empire of rock where fiendish demons have brought ruin and annihilation to the world.

Schafer's narrative introduction concludes and it's time to kick demon loincloth. Initially a disorientated Eddie, decked out with an elaborate pair of lamb chop sideburns, gets set upon by a pack of Skeletor wannabes. Fortunately he proves to put his *God of War* paint on and hack the scarlet druids into bone marrow with his newfound trusty axe, the Separator. Standard slashes and combos from any third-person beat 'em up feature, and there's a lot of jumping, smashing, flailing.

If all one saw of *Brütal Legend* were these few seconds they'd dismiss it as derivative, but the demo wasn't finished. With another horde of ghoulish punks approaching, Eddie's eyebrows arch as he realises the guitar he inadvertently brought into this dimension, Clementine, is imbued with magical powers. As he slashes down on the strings, bolts of lightning fry the thugs like an electric chair reprobate. The awesome meter in our room jumps.

After annihilating all the toe-level grunts the screen powers back to reveal Eddie on top of a huge mountain of bones.

As promised, it's straight off a heavy metal cover.

Immediately a massive hulking demon, four storeys high, leaps to the top. Schafer explains that by using Eddie's guitar it's possible to commandeer these huge beasts, which Eddie does, riding the beast like a rodeo bull while mouthing off hilarious dialogue to the evil powers that be.

"Sorry evil warlords for killing all your druids. I hope you don't mind. But you're evil, right?" Or words to that effect.

After crashing the beast into the base of the mountain, Eddie stumbles across secret guitar tablature left by the land's ancient race of Titans. Playing it on Clementine – it's currently a sequence of buttons – a hot rod falls from the sky: The Deuce. Not only does Eddie have access to this vehicle throughout the entire game, but Schafer stated that a variety of tablature with different effects will also feature. Some will have the ability to change the time of day (*Brütal Legend* utilises real-world weather and time changes), melt the faces of enemies, or other extreme stuff.

After picking up a hot resistance number by the name of Orphelia, Eddie motors his way over a collapsing bridge and dispatches a massive plant-like boss. He then hits the tracks of this huge open metal paradise designed like no other. Massive stone swords are buried *

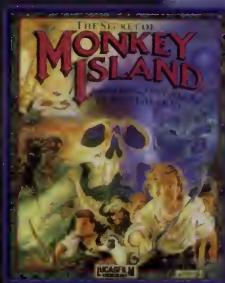


“Players will be free to either hooch around the land in The Deuce, creating their own playlists with the car’s Mouth of Metal feature, or to hop straight into the pork and beans of the story.”

SCHAFER'S HANDIWORK

After earning a computer science degree, Schafer went to work at LucasArts where he pumped out most of his A-grade stuff.

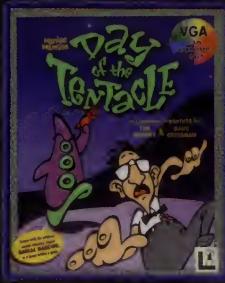
The Secret of Monkey Island & *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*



This adventure series was supposed to be serious until Schafer and fellow writer Grossman wrote hilarious placeholder dialogue.

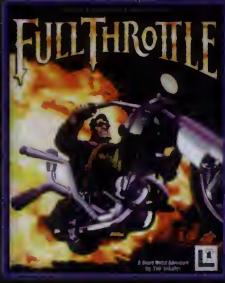
Day of the Tentacle

Teaming up with Grossman, Schafer scored his first lead role on this time-traveling adventure.



Full Throttle

His first solo project at the helm, it too was touted as a heavy metal adventure.



Grim Fandango

You want originality? This point-and-click game was set in the Aztec afterlife. It was arguably Game of the Year in 1998.



Psychonauts

Schafer's first game after leaving LucasArts and founding Double Fine Productions. It debuted on PS2 and Xbox in 2005 to critical acclaim but miserly sales.



deep in the ground, and there are slew of inviting nooks and crannies to sniff around.

Schafer informs all that, as usual with open-world titles, players will be free to either hooch around the land in The Deuce, creating their own playlists with the car's Mouth of Metal feature, or to hop straight into the pork and beans of the story. Schafer does the latter, sending Eddie to rub shoulders with the game's three-peep strong resistance. Think of a sexed up ABBA and you'll have some idea of what to expect from Lars and his two metal babes. After some banter, Schafer sets Eddie off to start recruiting the resistance army.

The next mission sold the game.

Up to this point it had been a fruitball action riot with a bit of driving, some rock guitar, and nice variety, but the true scope of *Brütal Legend* was yet to be seen. With Schafer's sparse commentary in the background, Eddie and Lars sneak into the mine housing resistance soldiers. These gits look like a pack of Venice Beach bodybuilders with penises for necks – they're Head Bangers – and they're busy smashing down rock walls with their foreheads. After a quick Battle Cry guitar solo, they immediately fall in love with metal and join Eddie's cause, ready to be bossed around with the game's simple squad commands.

Sure, this gang-based element has been done before. Even *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* allowed players to lure packs of hoodrats into their backseat for extra muscle, but there's more strategy in *Brütal Legend* – more fun. While the squads can be ordered to stay, attack, and move to various positions on the map with the D-pad, they can also be used to form into a travelling moshpit around Eddie. Eventually as Eddie mines his way through the missions, his entourage of thugs can grow to 15. Schafer stated that players would have to send their 15 jars of muscle into combat against another 15 grunts, with Eddie able to circle the pack and throw in strategic attacks. What's more, the player's army will also feature variety. Aside from muscle-thumping Head Bangers, Eddie will also recruit odd characters, like Lemmy, Motörhead's mascot, who rides around on a motorbike playing his bass to heal player troops, or a haunted bride that drifts about electrocuting enemies.

If that wasn't enough, Eddie can also – at set times – set up massive rock arenas and recruit an even bigger army for 40-on-40 grunt battles. Schafer was obviously keeping the details of how this will go down under wraps, but he willingly stated that this sort of unique gameplay will feature in the game's multiplayer!

Yes, multiplayer. According to Schafer, development of this facet of the game started first as it was the one element he was most afraid of. The single-player game was actually made later. That's afforded a lot of polish for this mode that looks like it'll play a bit like PC-only

masterpiece *Sacrifice*. Again, we don't have any firm facts on how many players it'll support outside of Schafer's comments of "several – more than one," but that's enough to get us chewing on our own fingers like hyperactive chimps.

Then the demo was over and Schafer walked out of our lives. He didn't leave us his number on a napkin, or even offer to add us on Facebook. Still we'd seen a fair chunk of *Brütal Legend*, and were left wanting more. More hilarity, more brutal imagery, more innovation. There was nothing left but to go home and prep for gaming's first heavy metal rampage through a fantasy land of demons and thunder guitars.

Brütal Legend is set for a release this Rocktober. ♫



“...and I found this in my nose.”



“Ah, my car! I'm not supposed to get fire in it!”



“I think I'm lost. This isn't Adelaide, is it?”



THE POWER OF JACK BLACK

Schafer has made no secret that the character of Eddie Riggs was based on Jack Black from the get-go, even though he thought he'd have between buckley's and nil chance of getting Black onboard. But that all changed when he found out Black had played and completed *Psychonauts*. With new confidence, Schafer's people hooked up a meeting with Black's people, and after showing Jack Black the early art and direction of the game, the star of *Tenacious D* and *School of Rock* was on board.



Wolfenstein

ACHTUNG!

Way back in 1992, a game by the name of *Wolfenstein 3D* came along and, with one fell swoop created a brand new genre – the first-person shooter. We owe a lot to this bad boy, so it's with respectful reverence that we await its highly anticipated next gen debut on PS3 from Relic.

Stepping once again into the more-than-capable combat boots of special agent B.J. Blazkowicz – the man who single-handedly shut down Himmler's Übersoldat program and thwarted the resurrection of ancient superhuman King Heinrich I – it'll be up to you to take on the might of the Nazi war machine and prevent Heinrich Himmler's quest to master an occult force known only as the Black Sun.

Thanks to Activision, here's your chance to see the Relic's. For the chance to win one of five copies up the upcoming Nazi-blaster *Wolfenstein* just answer the following question:

If you had to take on the SS, who would YOU want fighting by your side?

Entry instructions on page 21.



THE MONSTERS ARE COMING

A hit overseas in its native Japan, and yet having sold over eight million copies worldwide, the *Monster Hunter* franchise is still relatively unknown in Australia. But those caught in its universe will happily show off their 200+ hour game times. *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite*, the latest in the series, could be the new reason you'll never let go of your PSP.

Words: Paul Taylor

HI-HO, HI-HO

The different quests you'll experience in *Monster Hunter* can be broken up into three different types. Keep in mind, though, there are hundreds of quests available.

Gathering:

collecting items, eg., mushrooms, herbs,

Slaying:

a criteria of slaying 20 pig-like creatures

Hunting:

usually tracking down a boss monster

“Its popularity in Japan is hard to overstate”

Around the room there are roughly six groups of four people clutching PSPs, and music reminiscent of *Final Fantasy* gently spills out into the room. It sounds like someone has mischievously opened several dozen jewellery boxes. Each group of monster hunters is prepping their inventory to go and fight. OPS, given first refusal in our team of four, chose to be the hard hitter: a big dude with a large sword. Quite apt, really, as Game Planner and Monster Designer Shintaro Kojima describes *Monster Hunter* as “a game where you hunt huge monsters with huge weapons”.

Freedom Unite is the sixth in the series, having sold over three million copies since it launched in Japan in April 2008, and its popularity is hard to overstate. Within the first week of being on sale, *Monster Hunter Portable 2nd G* (as its known in Japan) shifted one million units in the first six days. The PSP itself is in the hands of more than 10 million people in Japan, compared to 529,000 in Australia, and the *Monster Hunter* franchise is casually credited with selling hardware. Indeed, Capcom in Japan host ‘*Monster Hunter Festa*’, an annual event dedicated to playing the

game, as well as elaborate cosplay competitions and selling exclusive merchandise. In 2007, roughly 2,200 people showed up to the event in Fukuoka and it served as the preliminary rounds of the nationwide *Monster Hunter* contest. Our team, however, has some way to go before reaching finals quality.

We’re looking at the quest board, a seemingly jumbled collection of odd jobs and ‘help wanted’ notes haphazardly pinned up. The inn where hunters come back to between each quest has skulls of defeated monsters hanging on the walls and a blazing fire rests next to the board, which the rest of our party mill around after choosing the hunting quest. This means that we’re on our way to defeat, typically, a boss monster though there are hundreds of quests available broken up into different types (see ‘hi-ho, hi-ho’). Departing from the quest board we’re out into the game world. A pit stop to a supply box yields a map and some rudimentary supplies, though for the purpose of the demo we’ve been fully laden.

“Fighting comes quite a bit after starting a new game,” says Mao Sugiyama, international Business Coordination Assistant. “You learn the system first: how to deal with weapons,

items and so forth.”

It’s a good thing; as we run across the sandy desert to take down the boss we have to consume a Cool Drink item to increase our heat resistance but fumble the controls, losing the party in the process. The D-pad controls the camera so we swap between stick and D-pad, feeling unco, ‘til we learn that Mao has his index finger in a kind of claw, rapidly altering the perspective whilst maintaining his running speed. Looking at videos of expert players without seeing their hands, *Monster Hunter* could be a game that runs on a system that utilises dual sticks. We’re used to playing games and discovering how to best play it for ourselves, and *Freedom Unite* has a tutorial system built in, but relying on that alone means we’d be missing out on what makes *Monster Hunter* special.

“In single player, there’s so much content – info, items, weapons, armour – it’s unlike any other game, [as well as] in terms of control interface, structure and just generally the aim of what it is you’re trying to do,” says Leo Tan, Capcom’s UK PR Manager, who has amassed more than 500 hours playing the series. “Most people just don’t get it, they put

Wouldn't be dead for squids



CAT ATTACK

In *Freedom Unite* a player can hire up to 10 Felynes, and they're your servants. If you're on a quest on your own one of them will come and fight, and if you're in a kitchen they'll cook your food. Handy. Cats have different skills, experience points, and the recipes they know are different. "You have to make sure your cats are good at cooking, as you can get negative effects like half-health," said Sugiyama. "That's part of the game; you have to train and grow your cat as well as hunt for talented cats." Even if they're good overall, if they're not adept at cooking a particular ingredient, you could end up with a fur ball rather than a five star dish.

Felynes aren't only chefs – they also operate as bait in battle. If you play on your own, the cat is used mostly as a distraction and can't die, but hide when they're damaged. Kojima-san told us "in Japan some solo players do exist who have never played co-op play and don't have the opportunity to do so, so by implementing the combatant Felynes they could virtually experience the co-op play aspect."

it down and they leave it. It's only when you're playing with other people that it gives you time to move around, explore, and it really comes into its own." Our demo is running along at a steady pace, with Sugiyama giving us hints and instructions on what to do on a step-by-step basis. In Japan, this is the norm. As Tan says, it's ideal to "have someone in the group who can explain what's going on so that way you don't have to rely on going through the tutorial. That's one thing Japan has: now that there's so many people playing it's easy to get loads of people [joining in], and we just need to have enough people out there who know and then hopefully one person will teach another person and so on."

After crossing the desert and in to another zone we find the boss: a giant crab-like creature. It's pretty hard to miss, as it takes up about a third of the screen and towers above our character's head. The shell is pretty tough and there's little point attacking the giant monster skull on its back, so we have to aim for the soft parts of the creature. "Each monster has 10 different

parts that have defence points," says Sugiyama. "So sometimes it's futile hitting it when it's armoured." All four hunters start to attack the boss, and only a couple of minutes in our avatar's health hits zero and we die. A short respawn and we're back, but told that if there are three deaths within the party, the quest is a failure and we have to restart. "Aim for the leg and it'll trip over," says Sugiyama. It's obvious, then, that teamwork is paramount and it is possible to avoid every attack if you know what you're doing. The difficulty remains constant, regardless of the number of hunters going against a monster: an experienced player could kill a monster than four beginners can't.

Someone attacks a leg to slow the creature down, another lays a trap to keep it still, but the crab decides a tactical retreat is the best option. "When it gets damaged, monsters in *Monster Hunter* usually run away," explains Sugiyama. "They don't just wait to be killed. There's no health bar for the monster: the only clue is how it's behaving – so if it starts limping [or] if it gets angry it might be damaged. It'll keep running away and moving awkwardly when it's almost dead". We follow it to another zone, trap it in a corner and a few critical strikes later it's down. Feeling pretty proud we have to 'carve' the monster to claim

our prize. Each player has the chance to carve three times, and every monster yields different items – we could get up to ten different items just from the crab – as well as a cash reward for completing a quest. Those items can then be taken to a smith who will combine and turn them into weapons. Every person gets their own reward, so if you're lucky you could snap up an ultra-rare item and no-one else will. "When you kill the pink Rathian there's only, say, a two percent chance it dropping the Rathian ruby," says Tan. "You, or you and your friends, might kill him 20 times and only get that once. You can use that to build a sword your mates

Most people just don't get it. They put it down and they leave it

don't have; the next time you go into a fight you have a sword that looks like an umbrella and you can say 'I made that from the ruby!'

Quest over, and given the opportunity to save our game, we're about to enter the kitchen back at the inn. The money we earned isn't only put towards the smith, but also buying items and, as we're about to, food from the Felyne Kitchen. Eating will increase our speed, health and stamina, though to get the most out of the cats they need to be trained, and in the right area – plus they come



High fives. They're back

UP, UP AND UPGRADE

Apart from the hundreds of pieces of armour and weapons, as well as new quests, monsters and areas in *Freedom Unite*, one of the handiest features is the ability to install the game to a Memory Stick to cut down on load times. Why don't all games do this?

Plus, if you have *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* you can carry over your game save.

THE RIGHT CONNECTION

Depending on the success of *Freedom Unite*, the next *Monster Hunter* may be an online game. However, the ad-hoc system is truly robust, and the Felyne combatants are worthy partners for friend-bereft hunters.

PSSST, DON'T TELL ANYONE, BUT...

"Because people used to say *Monster Hunter* was about cooking meat," said Kojima-san, "the team used to go to BBQ restaurants all the time, so in R&D there are many fat people."



in handy in battle (see 'Cat Attack').

Back to the quest board and our next quarry is a flying creature: the Wyvern. For the sake of time, Sugiyama uses an item that – briefly – marks on the map which zone the creature is in. Without it you have to do it the old-fashioned way: by looking for it yourself. Monsters on route to the boss battle are neutral; it is possible to just run past them but if you attack they will fight back. We pass several that look a bit like smaller versions of the giant crab we fought 10 minutes ago as we jog through two or three zones. Kojima-san later tells us there are over 90 monsters, both small and large, but they're not specific to the map. Some will change habitats.

The Wyvern is a more ferocious creature than the crab. Being airborne we all have to get pretty close to hit it with our melee weapons. Plus, it's spewing fireballs at the party and causing a few headaches. We dive at it; one hunter lures the creature while the others run up and stab. Our team is equipped with melee weapons, so the combat is at close quarters and, well, we're getting slammed. There are ranged weapons available that would make the task easier. "You can get crossbows, and guns, but they're a bit more difficult to use," says Sugiyama. Any tips? "It's always good to aim for the head."

We get whacked by the tail of the Wyvern and started to look more purple than usual. "You could use an antidote," says Sugiyama. "But I don't think you have one. You just have to heal yourself until the poison goes away." We look

at our massive sword and try to cut the Wyvern's tail off so it can't do the poison attacks (see 'Tall Tails'). Our party was on a beach near a lush rainforest, and were being pushed into the side of a cliff. While we tried to turn the battle around a small crab got caught up in the middle of the fracas and started attacking another person in our party. Three deaths later and we'd failed the quest. Demo time was over. The whole episode only went for 30 minutes, which fits well with the bite-sized gameplay PSP owners are looking for. When asked if this was typical, Kojima-san told us "it depends on the number of people you're playing with, but on average [a mission will go for] 20 minutes, though hard monsters require 30-odd minutes even with four people playing together." It sounds limitless. "There actually is an ending," says Kojima-san. "When you beat a certain monster through the village quests you can actually see the ending, but that actually unlocks many things for you to go further. So in that sense there is an official ending but there's no ending to the playability of the game."

"It's definitely a community game: *Monster Hunter* is social gaming," says Tan. "But it's a proper hardcore game; there's progress, you develop your character over long periods of time, you get together with other people and you do that. All these quick 10 to 15 mission jaunts that you do with your friends combine to be that huge *Monster Hunter* experience. You do kind of need the community there [for it to happen]. But how do you get the community there? Well, that's the tough part."

TALL TAILS

Trying to cut the tail off was a sound idea. "As you're fighting monsters you might want to cut a monster's tail off which will change the dynamic of the fight," says Tan. "Or make a monster with a really big horn run into a wall and break the horn off that way."



Tails (never fails)

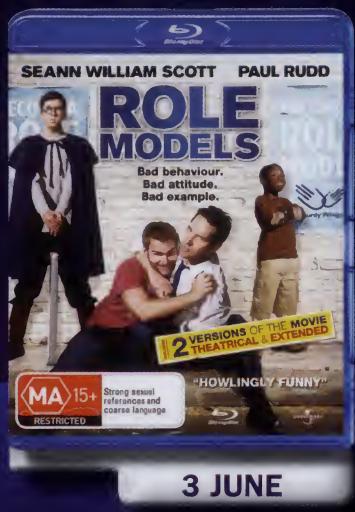
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THIS ISSUE

- 68** inFamous
- 72** Prototype
- 76** Terminator Salvation
- 78** Ghostbusters
- 80** Bionic Commando
- 81** FUEL
- 82** Damnation
- 83** Virtua Tennis 2009

"This game is a minor classic, though that's not the first impression it gives"

inFamous

We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



REVIEW RATING



10 **Incredible:** Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.



9 **Excellent:** An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.



8 **Great:** Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 **Good:** A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 **Decent:** This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong... just.

5 **Mediocre:** A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 **Poor:** Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 **Very disappointing:** Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 **Terrible:** Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 **The worst:** Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

**EASY
ACCESS**

Booting up *inFamous* is a treat. After the briefest of title screens, the game automatically loads up your last save. Why don't more other games do that? It's so obvious!

**INFO**

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: JUNE 2009
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$109.95



INFAMOUS

First you get the sugar. Then you get the power. Then you get the women...

This game is a minor classic, though that's not the first impression it gives; *inFamous* is designed from the ground up to defy your expectations. The city you explore, the game mechanics, the story, presentation, music and interface all conspire to play silly buggers with your perceptions of what video gaming is all about.

This excellence was itself a surprise, since Sony gave us only minimal preview access. Usually that only happens with a particular video game when it's downright awful, and its publisher doesn't want the punters to find out.

But in the case of *inFamous*, they did the right thing. If one was simply to play five minutes or so at a press event, one might be left with the impression that this was a shallow, me-too exercise in urban crime action; *GTA* meets *Spider-Man*. Yet the game evolves as you play. Unlocking new powers lets you interact with the environment in bold new ways — every hour or so you find yourself looking at the game world with new eyes.

Take the elevated train tracks. At first, these seem to be just part of the furniture, as ubiquitous as mail boxes and newspaper dispensers, and just as useless, seeing as no-one commutes in this post-apocalyptic world. But a few hours in, you get an upgrade that allows you to grind along any electrified train track (or overhead power line). At a stroke, the time and hassle involved in getting about town is slashed.

This is one of those rare games where the more time you put in, the more you get

out of the experience. For those who came in late, the setting is Empire City, a New York-esque metropolis that has been sealed off from the outside world. The US military is convinced that some kind of plague is loose, and will shoot dead anyone who tries to escape.

You control Cole, a motorcycle courier who one day unwittingly delivered a WMD to the middle of town. The resulting explosion from this psychic EMP warhead left a massive crater and killed thousands, transferring all of their bioelectricity into our unwitting protagonist. The result: super powers.

Starting out, you're resilient (though not invulnerable) to gunfire and explosions, and can survive a fall from any height. You can also shoot electricity from your hands; useful for dealing with the army of snarling brainwashed hoodlums who have taken over the city.

Your weakness: water. Take a dip in Empire City Bay, or one of the canals or sewers of this proud city and you'll have mere seconds to escape. Massive damage from water (or fire, or gunshot wounds, or steam) leeches the screen of colour, dulls the music, and generally imparts a woozy, concussed effect. This is your cue to seek cover, lest your progress from the last auto-save point be lost when you die and restart.

While the city bustles with traffic, and the villains bristle with AKs, RPGs, and even miniguns, Cole himself can use neither vehicles nor guns. This is explained away early on; Cole's dynamo-like biology flattens car batteries and cooks off the bullets in any

firearm he holds.

It doesn't matter — your powers are more than enough. Over the 20+ hours of campaign play time you get to unlock multiple new abilities in turn. Some are earned automatically, while others are optional, and tied to your alignment and how much XP you've earned along the way. Maxing out your powers is but one of the motivations for completing side missions; these optional tasks also permanently clear re-spawning enemies from a given zone, making your schlepping between major story events that little bit easier.

Powering-up is gratifying. For instance, Focus is brilliant; it lets you slow down time and zoom in simultaneously, making headshots a snap. This power is perfect for dealing with rooftop gun nests, often placed near key mission objectives. Pitch a lighting bolt right through its tiny little viewing slit, and its pesky torrent of hot lead will cease. Focus also lets you even the score with the snipers that scamper on ledges and rooftops. It's a bit of a pain to eyeball them, but the catharsis of watching baddies fall five storeys to their doom is worth it. Cole is sparing with his catchphrases; feel free to add your own.

You can send out shockwaves that send cars and hoodlums flying, or fire off grenades and exploding missiles made of pure energy. Each power has its own distinct tactical advantages; if you've failed a given mission a dozen times in a row, then you're probably forgetting to use one of them.

All your abilities and attacks use the →

same kind of 'ammo'; the quantity of electrical energy currently charged up in Cole. It can be replenished from myriad sources: power poles, parked cars, payphones, etc. Clicking in L3 will highlight all the leech-able items in the immediate vicinity, then holding **L2** will commence the power drain, lightning arcing between the hero and his target.

Well, to be clear, he's only a hero if you want him to be — you can also 'bio leech' power from innocent bystanders. By completing all the explicitly evil side missions, hassling civilians, and choosing the evil option at certain moral quick-time events, you open up different powers, different dialogue, and a very different game. *inFamous* is good for at least two play-throughs.

One design element is not affected by your morals: you can climb over just about everything. Buildings are covered with drainpipes, structural steel, window sills, balconies, eves, and other assorted architectural features that make scaling just about any surface is a snap — the challenge usually lies in picking an optimal path between all the scum-sucking criminals hurling bullets and garbled abuse from above.

Granted, the skyscrapers don't go as high as in the real New York, but they don't need to. They're generally just high enough to provide annoying sniping positions for the enemy, and enough kinetic energy for your super-powered Ram Slams to the pavement below. Everything in the game has been put there for a reason.

Plenty of artistic liberties have been taken, and almost all of them work. Empire City is a hard-boiled game world, filled with grubby tenements, crumbling statues, and run-down wharves. All the cars on the streets appear to be huge '70s-era land whales, like something out of *Dirty Harry*. And while the overall composition is dark, the colour palette of all the neon and brick is surprisingly varied. There's a fine line between moody and poo-brown colouring, and it's one the creators have not crossed. Sure, buildings appear drab at a distance, but there's more here than meets the eye — clambering all over them reveals subtle arrays of shadow and colour.

Surprises abound. The first army of goons you fight, the red hoody-wearing Reapers, are generic enough, barring the monstrous gurgling of their voices. But before long you're fighting mini-bosses with super-powers of their own; 'Conduits', who can teleport, or spawn armies of horrific crab monsters formed of crackling orange energy and trash. The artistic splash pages used instead of CGI cut scenes ram home the comic book aesthetic.

Cole can see dead people, too. Specifically, he can

STEREO-TYPING

The generic, grunt-level baddies you kill by the hundred are drawn from the most hated tribes of the urban landscape: hoodies and bums. Hate hoodies? Hate bums? Then you'll LOVE *inFamous*.

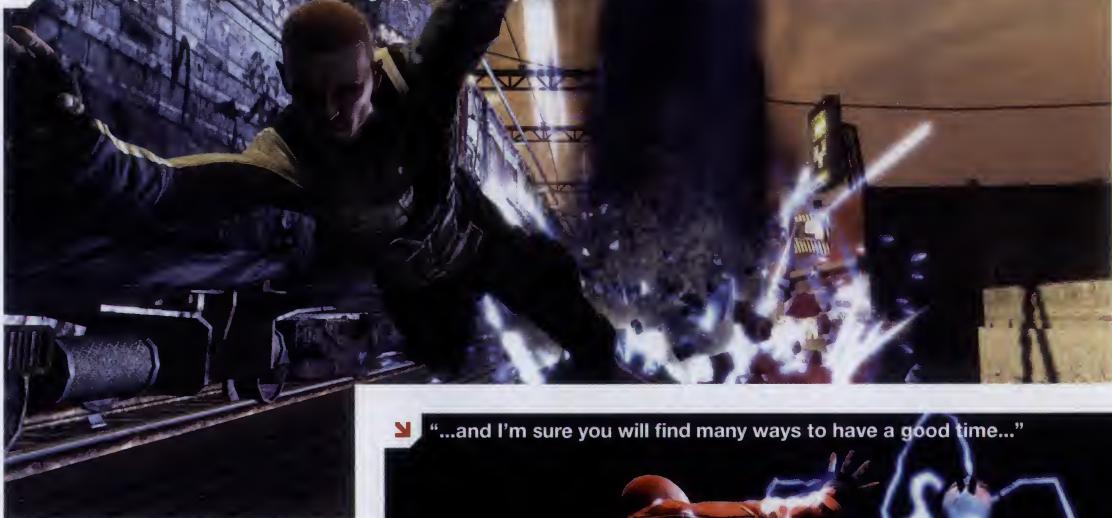
QUOTE-AHOLICS

Chapter breaks are marked by quotes about responsibility from the brain-box power-brokers of history. "Men are not prisoners of fate, but prisoners of their own minds." Nice cop out, FDR, but words won't cure your polio...



"Young man, there's a place you can go, I said young man..."

"...when you're short on your dough, you can stay there..."



"...and I'm sure you will find many ways to have a good time..."

and track the psychic scents of those who killed them. In game terms, this means following crackling green silhouettes as they slowly walk from the scene of the crime.

There are other nifty graphical effects, and the best of the lot are the hallucinations. Cole is periodically exposed to mind-bending drugs, making him see armies of villains the size of clock towers. The warping visuals are typically accompanied by reverberating mockery from some chick called Sasha, who appears to be one of Cole's insane ex-girlfriends. She has powers too, but that's hardly unusual in this messed up universe.

Another surprisingly good game feature is the story. Objectives and allegiances chop and change, and the radio chatter drips with comic book melodrama. Characterisations are a tad shallow, but again, that fits the mood to a T.

inFamous is a solid game, and quite addictive, but falls a tad short



WORSE THAN GTAIV | BETTER THAN PROTOTYPE



"it's fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A"

FINAL SAY:

• Top run-and-gun action through engaging missions in a sprawling, secret-riddled city.

• Plot twists, power upgrades, and trippy effects conspire to defy your expectations.

• Glitch-prone graphics

• Die-and-restart challenges can grate at times

VERDICT:
A fresh take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox genre, and another surprise hit from Sucker Punch.

9

of perfection. Many of the missions involve escorting vulnerable civilians, which of course means you're only ever one stray bullet away from a restart. Missions are often more frustrating than challenging, requiring you to do the same thing 20 times in a row before you fluke a pass. The character animations are a little off close up, making the micro cut-scenes seem more like puppet shows than cinematic drama. Plus there's the occasional narrative paradox; taking orders from a character you haven't met yet, and such. Overall though, this is excellent: in these cold winter months, *inFamous* crackles with warmth. **James Cotttee**

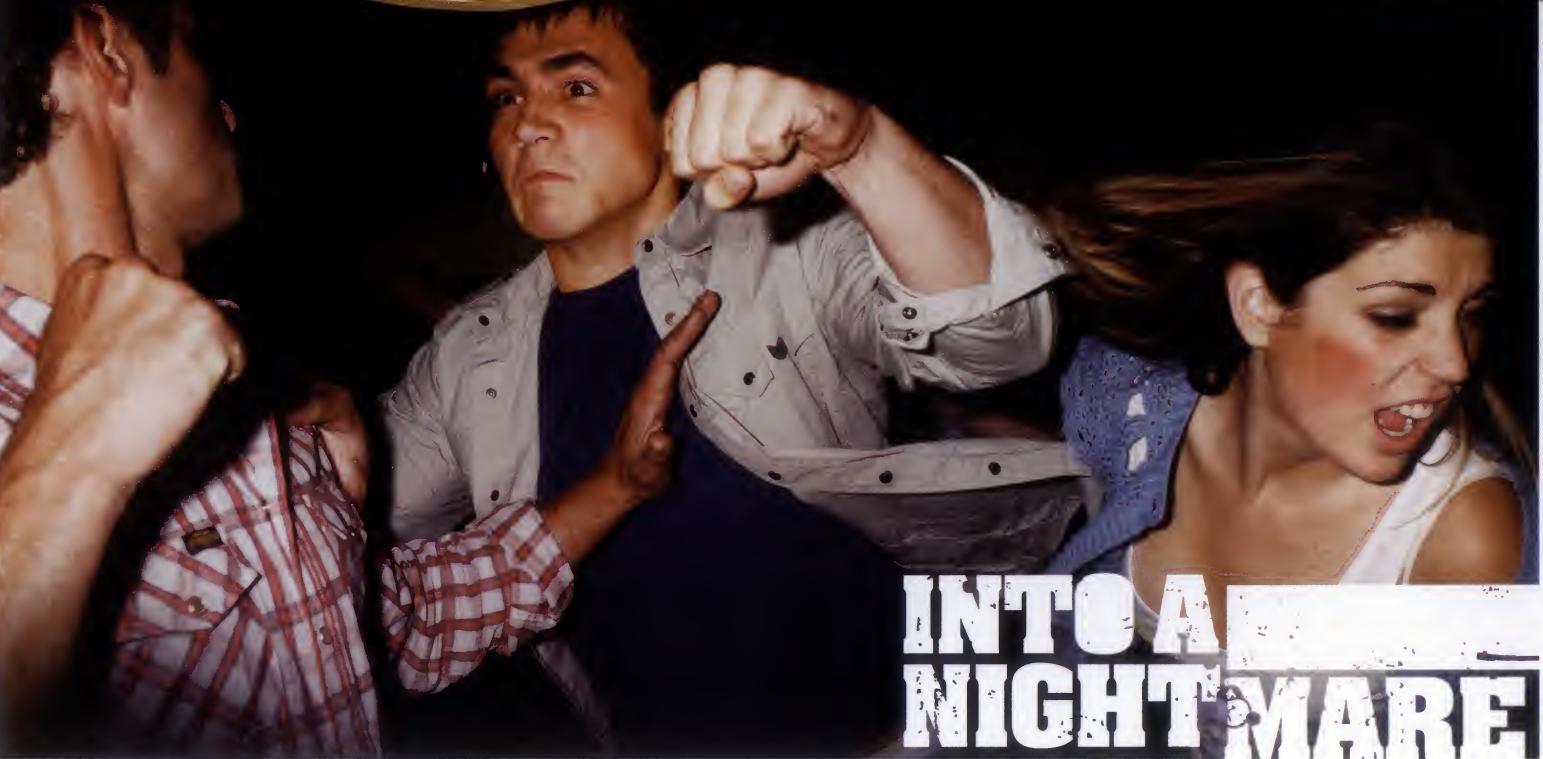


DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT



70 Australians under 25 will be hospitalised
due to alcohol-caused assault in an average week.

www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare





PROTOTYPE

One of a kind?

The great Activision-Blizzard buyout hubbub of 2008 wasn't without its casualties. When herding Vivendi's flock into its own corral Activision clung to the likes of *Prototype*, but gave *Ghostbusters* and *Brütal Legend* a shove out into the wild. We don't really get it. After playing *Ghostbusters* and seeing *Brütal Legend* close-up and personal, we're willing to say they're both marginally better games. That, however, isn't to say *Prototype* isn't any good though.

Because it is.

HACK 'N SLASH

In a Tarantino twist, *Prototype* begins at what initially appears to be the end – or close to it. As a fully powered-up Alex Mercer you'll run riot through Times Square, the game holding your hand part of the way to teach you the ropes. Then, nearly as suddenly as it began, you'll find yourself on a morgue slab – sans most of the abilities you were just teased with – two weeks earlier. It's a clever move from Radical; you immediately want to set about becoming that powerful again.

Alex Mercer, the game's lead, is the victim of some genetic vandalism that has given him incredible superpowers. What he becomes over the course of the game is a Swiss Army knife of superheroes. He can soar like a sugar glider and leap like a flea. He can run up a wall as easily as cleave a man in two with his bionic blades. He can shapeshift. He can survive the impossible. He's powerful. Really powerful.

Some of the visuals are a shade workmanlike, and the city feels a bit bland, but the controls are a breeze considering the amount of stuff Radical want you to do with Mercer. We won't describe them in detail here, but we had no trouble dealing with all that power at our fingertips. Worth noting: Alex automatically leaps over cars and debris when super-sprinting, like *Assassin's Creed*, to keep things moving.

ONE TRICK PONY

Believe us when we say there's plenty to like about *Prototype*. There is. There are some warts though.

It'll take a few hours before you realise there's not a great deal to the missions

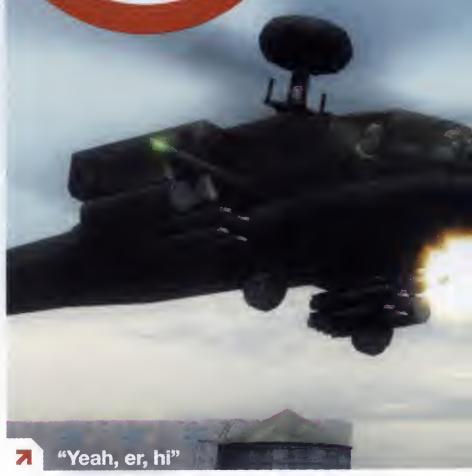
themselves. You'll either be destroying stuff and slicing people up, or sneaking about to make an upcoming dose of destroying stuff and slicing people up a fraction easier. It does this very well, but we found our interest beginning to wane just over halfway through. Excitement levels can be bolstered temporarily by the upgrade system, but this wears off too.

We wouldn't say the civilian AI is designed to stand up to much scrutiny either. They have two speeds. Walk, and run away. The issue is a great many of them have problems doing the latter. Stop your tank in a narrow street and batty New Yorkers will crouch down and take cover... in front of it. Squashing them is funny, sure, but it's pretty stupid. Stupid too are the ones who run TOWARDS you while you're busy mashing the 'chop everyone in half button'. It's a neat spectacle, but this kind of collateral damage makes Alex Mercer a tough guy to really care about. At all. It gets harder and harder to shock the player when your kill tallies regularly skyrocket into four-figures.

Also, the climbing mechanic has a weird quirk that makes Mercer shimmy

KEEPING TRACK

'Operational Reports' after each of your encounters will give you an indication of how much death you dealt and how much the fuss you just caused cost the military. They're addictive, we'll give it that.



“Yeah, er, hi”



Wolverine, please don't sue



Is he half the man he used to be, or twice the man. He's in two pieces, after all



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: RADICAL
ENTERTAINMENT
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$119.95



WORSE THAN
INFAMOUS

BETTER THAN
SPIDER-MAN 3

GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

Prototype features a pretty neat upgrade system that'll keep you hanging in there for some time after your interest in the missions themselves drops off. New and wonderful ways of liberating limbs from bodies, as well as more efficient methods of getting from point A to point B (gliding, it's awesome – seriously), are all on offer to be purchased with your hard-won experience points. If you're running short on XP you can take down military bases (make sure you consume any important people inside it) or infected hives for big hauls. Our advice? You'll need the airdash and the gliding – it makes getting around much easier. Jump height and run speed are essential too. As for offensive upgrades? Ground spikes. And stealth consume.

FINAL SAY:

• Highly kinetic, it really is a breeze to navigate your across town. Fun, too

• As far as pure power fantasies go, this definitely ticks all the right boxes

• It really only has one speed: kill everything

• A fraction rough around the edges at times

VERDICT:
A truckload of guilty fun, Prototype offers a lot of freedom. Beneath it all it's a simple kill-fest, but it works well.

8



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Wireless microphones are also compatible with your PlayStation®2

Unplug your inner SingStar.

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Mild Themes



PLAYSTATION® 3





INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: WB GAMES
DEVELOPER: GRIN
PLAYERS: 1-2 (CO-OP)
PRICE: \$99.95

TERMINATOR SALVATION

"Come with me if you want to be bored shitless."

Game adaptations of movies are, with very few exceptions, utter shit. Apologies if that rather blunt statement offends your gentle sensibilities, readers, but it's true. Time after time we gamer 'word nerds' get excited about the latest blockbuster's tie-in and time after time we are disappointed.

You'd think after it had happened a dozen times or so we'd just realise that these titles are cynical, sub par cash-ins designed (possibly by Satan or that dead-behind-the-eyes succubus, Paris Hilton) to do one thing: make money off punters. Usually wide-eyed moppets, hopped up on red cordial, who want to be able to play the kick-arse character they just spent two hours watching on the big screen.

IT'S JUST A GAME, MAAA-AAAN!

Can it, hippie. It's not just a game. Times are tight, money is scarce and if we've read correctly pigs flew recently [boom-tish!]. These are dark and strange times we live in and to waste a nanosecond on crappy games would be a crime punishable by a swift snap-kick to the taint.

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP, TIGER?

Okay, the handful of Xanax is kicking in, so let's talk *Terminator Salvation*. Set in LA in the year 2016 this game is an 'interquel', taking place between the distinctly average *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* and the much anticipated, albeit slightly dreaded, McG directed *Terminator Salvation*, starring Christian Bale as John Connor.

Whereas the movie could end up being mindless eye candy, the game would seem to have almost limitless potential to be kick arse.

Who can forget the glimpses of the machine rebellion in James Cameron's superior *Terminator* and *T2*? Remember the first time you saw that endoskeleton's foot crushing a human skull in the latter flick? Too cool for school. So it is with this backdrop that this third person shooter takes place, either with single player or co-op. It opens with a stunning pre-rendered animation with loads of explosions and Terminators causing the hapless player to think they're about to have a geek gasm...

...and then the game blurs onto the screen. The graphics are sub par. Some of

the Terminator models look okay we guess, and when it's in the dark you can sometimes squint and fool yourself that it's not crappy. Honestly, however, SO-COM on the PS2 is, on occasion, prettier. And that's not good enough.

"I NOW KNOW WHY YOU HUMANS CRY... YOU'VE PLAYED THIS GAME"

Perhaps this wouldn't stick out so much if the gameplay was any good. It's not. Really, it's not. For a start you can't jump. Ankle-high walls will hinder your progress. You have to use what may be the sloppiest cover system ever conceived. Pressing **X** will put you into cover, sometimes. It's a very fussy system. Once in cover you can blind fire or poke your head out to shoot. Holding **X** then give you a series of directions you can go. Using the analogue stick you'll roll, jump or run to the next bit of cover. Again it's only cover when the game says it's cover. That ruined truck? Sure. That other, almost identical ruined truck? No way! It's bewilderingly inconsistent. In fact, it's consistently inconsistent.

After you manage to get your head around the awful controls you'll be running from building to building, trying to destroy a Hunter/Killer that's floating around. The first level, set at night, actually accords a genuine sense of menace to the machines. It doesn't look too bad. Unfortunately the rest of the game takes place in daylight or underground making the crappy-looking textures and poorly constructed models all too obvious.

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

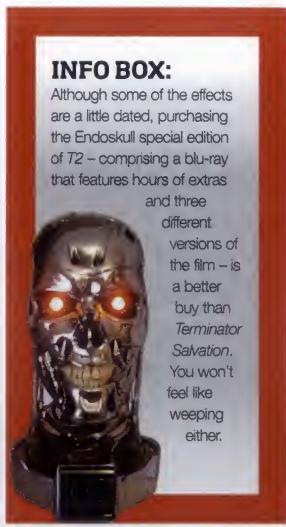
A recent acquisition to OPS towers was the T2 Blu-ray with Endoskeleton head (it makes noise and its eyes light up!) and using the Judgement Day date you can unlock the super extended version which clocks in at 153 minutes. You could maybe finish this game in that time. We don't like panning games like this, but it really is unforgivably awful.



FULL BLOOM

Rose McGowan (*Doom Generation*, *Charmed*) voices the game-exclusive character Angie Salter. Wow. Rose, get a new agent. Your current one's been sent from the future to kill your career.

5
1 / 18



"WHAT ABOUT THE ROBOT ARMY?"

Apart from the HK there are a meagre five types of Terminator: annoying flying ones; irritating crab-like ones; mildly diverting humanoid endos; ridiculous motorbike-without-rider units, and; the precursor to the Arnie model, using rubber skin to infiltrate the resistance. The latter model is probably the only interesting part of the game. The machines learn you can do more damage from within so they adapt. The humans then learn to make all strangers cut themselves to prove they have real skin - another form of adapting. Then, of course, the machines learn to use 'cybernetic organisms' and eventually liquid metal. Not that we see any of that in the game. No, the game has you sluggishly going from area to area, shooting one of the five different weapons at Terminators who don't explode or fall into pieces that continue attacking but sort of flash blue and crumble into, erm, metal dust. Or something.

"I NEED A VACATION"

Terminator Salvation is one of the worst film tie-in games we've ever played. The first level might entice unwary gamers so don't be fooled: the game gets progressively worse. Sure there are some slightly diverting vehicle sequences and co-op is a nice touch but this is a buggy, glitch-filled mess. Playing co-op was confusing until we realised the game was sending the

rumble to the wrong controllers, that is, player one's rumble was sent to player two's controller and vice-versa. Now that particular bug may not happen to you but it's a perfect example of what an appallingly rushed, cack-handed mess this is. Oh yeah, we finished it in less than four hours. It's incredibly short. Oh, *Terminator* franchise, how the mighty have fallen. 

Anthony O'Connor

FINAL SAY:

-  • We finally get to experience the machine revolution
- The theme song is played... yep
-  • Major glitches, horrible gameplay and a ludicrous plot
- You could finish it faster than watching *T2* special edition

VERDICT:
An abysmal failure. No sense of excitement, fear or anything.

4


 PlayStation
Official Magazine • Australia
SILVER AWARD

GHOSSTBUSTERS

Bustin' makes us feel good



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: TERMINAL REALITY
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$119.95

You can cross the streams in *Ghostbusters: The Video Game*, but only for a few seconds. Any longer and it'll blow up in your face, and you'll earn the Total Protonic Reversal Trophy.

That's just one of countless reasons to like *Ghostbusters*.

From when you boot up the game it's immediately apparent there's something unusual at work here; poles apart from your usual movie tie-in fare. The main menu screen is superimposed against the *Ghostbusters* firehouse, and from the very first cut-scene – when Ray Parker, Jr.'s theme song begins to wind up – it's hard not to get a fraction excited. The best thing is it's not long until your excitement is justified. After a brief re-introduction to the characters you'll be free to wander *Ghostbusters* HQ, slide down the pole, chat to the painting of Vigo the Carpathian, admire the newspaper clippings from the end of the films and much more. Down in the basement you'll be able to check out the containment grid before setting about recapturing Slimer. It's abundantly clear *Ghostbusters* is made by people passionate about the fiction; not people who boned up on it on Wikipedia.

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Ghostbusters takes place during Thanksgiving 1991, two years after the events in *Ghostbusters II*. For all intents and

purposes then, this is *Ghostbusters III*. As a rookie recruit you'll help Egon, Ray, Peter and Winston investigate a recent rise in paranormal activity linked to the New York museum's new Gozer exhibit.

It plays a little like *Dead Space* actually. Similar third-person set-up, similar controls, and a certain level of eeriness. *Ghostbusters* eschews *Dead Space*'s flat-out shocks and gore for restrained comic creepiness, but it works perfectly.

There's ample to love about this game, but little more so than simply trapping the ghosts. It's a good thing too, because you'll be doing quite a bit of it. After sapping a ghost's energy with your Proton Stream you'll need to wrangle them towards your trap, close enough so it can suck them in. It's a testament to how well Terminal Reality recreated this process in the game that the on-screen spectacle of arcing red Proton Streams and a cone of intense light drawing in a desperate, stretching ghost is as awesome the fiftieth time as it is the first.

The level design too, is inspired. It's tough to go into too much detail without potentially spoiling large sections of the game, so we'll be vague. You WILL fight the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man, for instance. Part of this fight will take place in Times Square, and it's an absolute visual treat. Firing up Proton Streams at him will leave blackened lines across his belly, and his changing facial expressions as you deal



All upgrades to your Proton Pack become visible add-ons. Very cool ↵



You'll fight animated beasties as well as regular ghosts ↵

WORSE THAN
GHOSTBUSTERS | **BETTER THAN**
GHOSTBUSTERS II



↙ The PKE meter. Gets you around



↗ We're ready to believe you

out damage are brilliant. Eventually you'll fight him perched over a skyscraper. It's epic nerd boner material.

You WILL go after the Grey Lady, the library ghost. The library level is one of our favourites. You WILL enter a collection room, look away for a second and suddenly find all the books stacked vertically. THAT one gave us chills. You WILL walk past a bunch of drawers that will slide out and jettison their contents into the air. Having ghosts messing with the world around you and levitating tables is fantastic, because it means even when you're not battling spooks things are constantly happening.

You WILL enter another dimension that looks like the inside of some kind of nebula. But that's all we're saying.

TOO COLD TO HOLD

It's not quite all skittles and nipples though, and *Ghostbusters* doesn't get it quite right all the time. Despite the fact the character models are bang-on, the lip-synching can vary from shonky to shoddy. This puts a slight dampener on the otherwise pitch-perfect presentation. We love the clean HUD (everything you need to know – health, weapon heat level – is displayed on your Proton Pack, *Dead Space*-style), but some of your objectives can be unclear as a result of exclusively verbal instructions. The destruction you can wreak with liberal and non-discriminate application of your Proton Stream is brilliant – furniture shatters, you can write curse words on the walls in blackened, flaming lines – but you may find yourself a little impeded by busted objects now and again, some of which will skate along in front of your feet and some

of which will stop you dead.

Make no mistake though; *Ghostbusters* has surprised the hell out of us. The only other film adaptation we can think of that comes as close to being as faithful to the source material upon which it is based is *The Warriors*. *Ghostbusters* has captured the spirit (pun entirely intended) of the original film franchise more successfully than we ever could've imagined.

It would've been easy to simply rabbit on about all the *Ghostbusters* trademarks that litter the game and hope you were infected by our semi-literate geek enthusiasm. Proton packs! Stay-Puft! Venkman's swagger! Symmetrical book stacking, just like the Philadelphia mass turbulence of 1947... wank, wank, etcetera. In-jokes, however, do not a great game make.

Ghostbusters, believe it or not, is far more than the sum of its fan porn though. If *Terminator Salvation*, reviewed on the previous page, is an example of almost everything that can go wrong when building a game from film material, *Ghostbusters* is a beacon of everything that can go right. It's clear *Ghostbusters* is an unashamed exercise in milking the bloated nostalgia glands of children of the '70s and early



'80s, but our praise for this game isn't throwaway hyperbole based on a childhood love for all things *Ghostbusters*. This is an excellent game. Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, a good mix of comic relief and genuine oomph, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits for an enjoyable game have come together for an immensely playable and thoroughly addictive experience. Just remember, when someone asks you if you're a god, you say yes. ↳ **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

- Truly admirable attention to detail, gallons of fan-service
- Tight gameplay, you'll be hooked after you trap your first ghost

- Shonky lip-synching, some objectives could be clearer
- Load times after dying are oddly long, and kind of annoying

VERDICT:
Robust, charming and impeccably presented. Impossible not to enjoy.

9

BIONIC COMMANDO

"Hey ladies, the arm's not the only extendable part..."



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1, MULTIPLAYER
PRICE: \$109.95

Bionic Commando has existed in many forms - arcade game, Nintendo property and even novels based on the game (!?) - however it's the 1988 NES version that has most fans smiling wistfully and staring off into the distance, toying with a lock of their hair and sighing.

Like *Bionic Commando: Rearmed* (oh, we just got that! Re-ARM-ed! Oh, those scamps) on the PSN it featured a side scrolling environment, a punishing difficulty level and, of course, the ability to swing off stuff with your dandy bionic arm.

It also eschewed the jump button, forcing the player to get intimately involved with the mechanics of said arm. Time has passed and now we have the first "official" sequel to *Bionic Commando* and it's... pretty good.

Not wanting to damn the thing with faint praise but that's about the level of excitement it manages to attain in this post *Spider-Man*, *Assassin's Creed* world. See, while in 1988 the idea of a man with a bionic arm was "so crazy it just might work", today it's just another power. These days you need a bionic arm, the ability to bend time, transform into an irritable feline and shoot shards of magic glass from your powerful, puckered cat date to even begin to cause some brain- and/or trouser-based excitement.

Having said that, the idea of a sweet-looking, fun-to-play, nostalgic entry into this next-gen era did appeal. Things were looking good too. Whether you love or hate the PSN *Bionic Commando: Rearmed*, you have to admit it looks lovely and has some genius old school gaming cred.

» "Hey buddy, hold still while I shoot those red arrows off your back"



WORSE THAN
BIONIC COMMANDO: REARMED

BETTER THAN
STORMRISE



Not pictured: a tidy city

If only they'd stayed on that righteous path. See, the biggest problem with *Bionic Commando* is that if you weren't a fan of the original, or more accurately, weren't aware of the original, you'll likely see this for what it is: an above average, third-person action game that gets terribly repetitive after a while.

This time you have a jump button, goofy dreadlocks and the voice of Faith No More

frontman Mike Patton (who did much better work on *The Darkness*). Yes you can swing your arm and do much harm, tearing into enemies and using their corpses/rubble/barrels to skittle the next batch of bandits. You can swing through ruined cities, dark caverns and lush rainforests, and the boss fights are a hoot, with you desperately swinging, shooting and swinging again but it's all very on rails. Glance at a screen shot and the whole city looks open for business. This is not the case. Anytime the game doesn't want you to explore an interesting looking area they just bung up blue clouds of radiation or fire, which can kill you instantly if you even dare to go near them. Also, the game's pretty easy once you start

unlocking special moves – not to mention glitchy, imprecise and kind of generic.

There's a moment before you fight a helicopter atop a skyscraper (one of the game's highlights) where you're standing beneath the tall building. Your commanding officer orders you to climb the bastard... and then it simply cuts to you being at the top. No 'climb the tall building' level! That, if nothing else, tells you what's wrong with the game – corners have been cut, level design feels rushed and there's no spark of genius to be found. Those of us who were alive before *The Simpsons* started might get a small kick out of the references to the original but for the rest, it's hard to imagine why you'd bother. **Anthony O'Connor**



'When helicopters go BOOM, Part 45'



He's into the 'swing' of things. Guffaw

FINAL SAY:

• Your arm can pull off some sweet, if squirrelly, moves
• The multiplayer is enjoyable. For a while

• On rails, repetitive and not terribly long
• Doesn't have the *Bionic Commando* feel

VERDICT:
There are some great moments but they're few and far between.

7

CONTROL YOURSELF

Hardwired into every racing fan's head is **X** or **□** to accelerate, **□** or **□** to brake and **A** to change viewpoint (or reverse, if you're *G7*). Stop right there, because that last button is reserved for resetting your position on track. Graze it even slightly with your thumb and the world fades to black, the speedometer flips to zero and you're sent to the back end of the pack.



INFO

GENRE: RACING
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: ASOBO STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$109.95

FUEL

Running on empty

There isn't enough room on this page to say what is wrong with *Fuel* but bear with us. We'll even skip the story as it's largely irrelevant. To give some point of reference, *Fuel*'s an open-world racer boasting a monstrous 14000 square kilometre chunk of terrain – but the potential to offer interesting, engaging races across the landscape is all but negated from the first menu screen.

Within career mode you can immediately select whatever available race you want. As you complete races, neighbouring camps in separate though linked parts of the map are unlocked. Each camp hosts

a number of events and they too can be selected for you to warp to. However, once a race is completed, various items and challenges are 'spotted' – even if you didn't physically go anywhere near them within the race – thus providing the impetus to roam and collect. Problem is, the items you do collect are pretty crap and pointless – grab new liveries for your motors and some locations purposely designed for enjoying the view. If you're lucky you'll chance upon a couple of loose barrels of fuel (the currency of the game) in free roam that have made their way into the wild though they're often just dumped in weird spots that aren't found by taking a specific or logical shortcut. It would've made sense to take a lesson from *Burnout Paradise* and

This is as about as exciting the world gets



Pictured: frustration

have race locations flow into one another, or not make *Fuel* an open world at all. As it is we're left with a jarring sensation whilst flitting around between events, but that's the least appalling bit.

Every vehicle we drove, from bikes to buggies, ATVs to muscle cars, felt dull and unconvincing to control, and were impossible to roll. Colliding with a tree at 100-odd clicks should mean glorious destruction but we just bounced off. The only visual indicator of damage, apart from the damage meter ticking up a notch, was an increasing plume of smoke until our vehicle was 100 per cent broken. A new one spawned without punishment. When we launched whatever-the-hell-we-were-driving off a ramp it floated in the air like a bad 1950s sci-fi prop. Our driver would bust out tricks on an ATV or bike but they're just for show and utterly random.

It also has a cluttered HUD. A mini-map exists, as does a waypoint marker to the next objective along with a compass and giant floating chevrons highlighting the safest route. We wanted to get rid of the chevrons but couldn't do so without switching everything off bar the mini-map, which, coincidentally, is barely usable. It's small, the arrows representing you and your opponents obscure the surrounding

paths and the roads marked out are painfully confusing. Insultingly, the game froze, twice, when we were exploring the landscape, and we also discovered a barn that we could drive through, like Casper can drift through a freakin' mansion. A real stinker. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

- The landscape can be glorious
- Mud and gravel spray convincingly

- The open world is a dead world
- Bugged, boring and undercooked

VERDICT:
A mess in need of a thorough overhaul.

4

DAMNATION

Welcome to Hell



Cleaning the pipes. Gross



Pondering whether to continue? Us too



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER: BLUE OMEGA
PLAYERS: 1-2
PRICE: \$109.95



Potential. It's a word that can be used to describe so many games in their infancy. On paper, *Damnation* sounds decent enough. Set on an alternate Earth with the American Civil War raging for decades, steampunk/Western stylings, opting for vertical level design as opposed to the usual horizontal one, all fine. Throw in a sexy co-star, a hardarse lead, some Nazi-esque elements and a robot ninja and the weirdness and wackiness is off the charts, and we like that. But all the unrealised potential in the world and a bag of chips nets you little more than a bag of chips in the end, and that's where *Damnation* falls apart.

The premise for the gameplay and its model are sound enough. The concept of

Steampunk cowboys < actual cowboys

MORE FUN WITH A FRIEND?

One thing *Damnation* has going for it is that you can opt for co-operative play with a buddy online or in the now almost defunct split-screen. It's one of few pluses that they've recognised that. Sure, going online is awesome to hook up with mates across long distances, but some of us like to get it on in the same room. Cough. Your next trick will be enticing someone to come along for the ride.



verticality has not entirely been explored (with a few exceptions), and using an *Unreal Tournament 2004* mod as a basis gives a nod to the fans and sets up an ideal starting point. However, there doesn't seem to be much development beyond that. Rourke Hamilton (the protagonist) is chunky and unbalanced. He's also a little schizophrenic, at times seeming to move in a sort of slow motion and others pirouetting on the spot with alarming quickness. It never really seems to get the balance right.

For a title that centres around vertical mobility we expected the jumping and grappling to be fluid, as we've seen in *InFamous* and *Prototype*. What we got, however, left us scratching our heads in disbelief. When faced with jumping between ledges on opposite walls working our way to the top of a shaft, we expected to repeatedly hit jump *Ninja Gaiden*-style and move on our merry way. What we were treated to instead was some craziness where you press \square to jump one way, and have to hold \triangle and \square to jump in the opposite direction. Err... huh? It was a needlessly complicated twist on a tried and tested mechanic. The general combat also suffered in a similar way.

Early levels looked prime for some duck

and cover heroics, yet when we drew our weapon, Rourke moved about in a semi-crouched stance, had no way to adhere to cover, and even on the easiest setting, enemies appeared almost out of nowhere, and with surprising and alarming accuracy sent us back to our last checkpoint.

Damnation is like a smattering of about a half a dozen different games that you may or may not know well; Microsoft's *Gears of War* and *Crackdown*, plus *GUN*, *Mirror's Edge*, *Unreal Tournament* and many more – but they've taken the less intriguing aspects rather than what's become industry standard. The result is a disjointed mess that fails across the board. Even the shamanistic touches like Spirit Vision and Healing (used to both locate enemies and heal allies) did very little to dull the pain. **Clint McCredie**

FINAL SAY:

- No chance of a sequel
- Uninspired level design
- Broken gameplay
- Not much fun at all

VERDICT:

We desperately wanted to give *Damnation* the benefit of the doubt, but everything about it just feels wrong. You need to do far better than this to cut the mustard.

3

WORSE THAN
STRAWBERRIES & CREAM | BETTER THAN
VIRTUA TENNIS 3

INFO

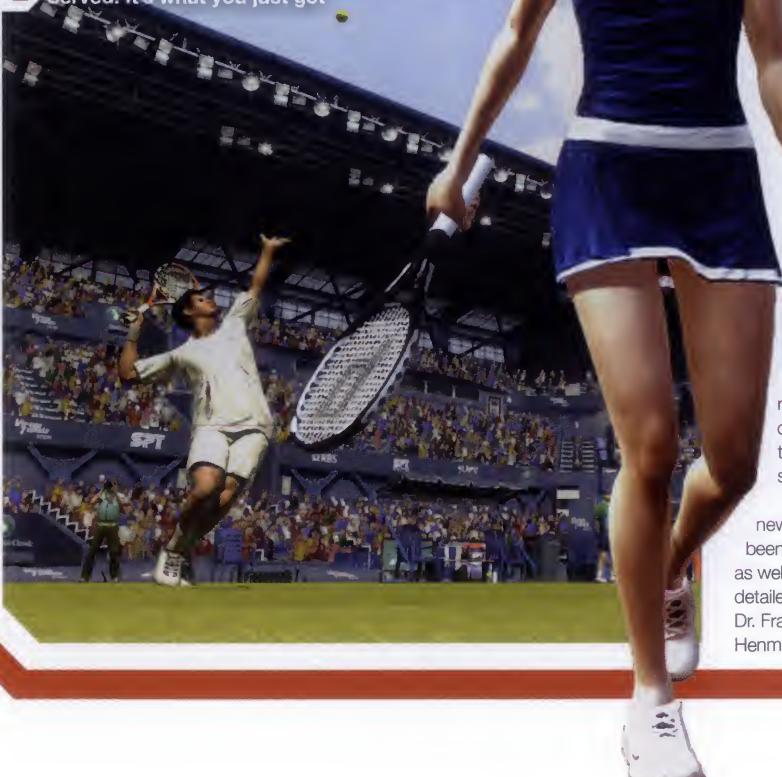
GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SUMO
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$99.95

PlayStation.
Bronze
Award

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

Are we feeling the lob?

Served: It's what you just got



Green shirts: court camouflage

WORLD BEATERS

So, where do the latest of tennis' best, according to *Virtua Tennis 2009*, hail from? Look at the graph guys, look at the graph!



Videogames and tennis have gone hand in hand since, oh, nearly the birth of games with *Pong*.

Thankfully, we've come a hell of a long way from those blocky days, as *Virtua Tennis 2009*, in all its crisp 1080p glory, is the best looking tennis we've seen this side of popping down to Wimbledon for a touch of courtside strawberries and cream (jolly spiffing, what).

Still, it's the second incarnation of the franchise on the PS3, so does it really offer enough over and above *Virtua Tennis 3*?

Let's see. We have a different player roster – 11 blokes, nine chicks and three 'legends' (we're not sure that Tim

Henman deserves that mantle yet, but we'll give Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg the benefit of the doubt). It likely won't come as any surprise that the series is now Aussie-less, with Lley-Lley given the flick and nobody local seeming to be coming even vaguely close to reaching the lofty heights of real life seediness to replace him.

The cardboard cut-out crowd is gone, replaced with neat 3D models of spectator types out for a touch of neck exercise and being shushed by umpires.

Players have been de-

klutzed somewhat, with less of a tendency towards falling over and more towards a bit of a slide as they give that extra grunt towards applying racquet to fuzzy ball. A couple of new courts have been added, including the freaky Dubai one on top of a skyscraper.

Sure, but all this is small stuff. Bigger news is that the 'World Tour' mode has been beefed up to include the Davis Cup as well as the Fed Cup, and it now features a detailed player maker, whereby you can play Dr. Frankenstein to your heart's content. Mr Henman is also now your coach.

A third view has been added, so as well as the traditional TV-styled look there's a behind the player angle, plus one that's about halfway between the two.

Score whores will be delighted with the new online ranking system, with all manner of points and prizes available for beating opponents over the web. If shouting your prowess to the world isn't enough, there's also the injection of oodles of trophies, awarding shiny objects for everything from logging 100 aces to clonking the line judge with a ball.

Mini-games also make a return, with seven oldies (including the salaciously titled 'Meat Defender') and five newies. Whilst often frustrating, these are good for honing ball thwacking skills.

Most importantly, the gameplay is as easy to pick up, but tough to master, as ever.

More of a *Virtua Tennis 3.5* than a new contender, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is well worth it if your games shelf doesn't already have a tennis game. If it does, however, we'd play before investing. **– Amy Flower**

FINAL SAY:

- Great selection of modes
- Lots of glory via online and trophies
- Real life player grunting – just shut it, OK!?
- Hardly essential if you own *VT3*

VERDICT:
The top seed of tennis games made even better.

8

INTERMISSION

On the box



CINEMAS DIRECTOR: McG | CAST: Christian Bale, Sam Worthington | IN CINEMAS: NOW

TERMINATOR SALVATION (M)

Terminator without Arnie – it's like peanut butter without the jelly, a kilt without the sporran, 'salt' without the 'pepa', Hitler without the moustache. It's a fart that doesn't smell, bangers without the mash, a doughnut minus the jam. It's bloody weird in an almost obnoxious fashion. It feels wrong. It is wrong.

Or is it? Maybe it isn't wrong. Maybe it's right. Have you ever wondered what Hitler might look like without a moustache? Maybe he looks handsome. Maybe he looks cool.

You simply never can tell.

But we can pinpoint the exact moment when we started to stroke our chins thoughtfully and entertain the possibility that *Terminator Salvation* might not suck sasquatch arse. It was the moment we first heard about the involvement of Christian Bale.

Why? Because we have a huge, inappropriate man crush on Bale – that's

why. That, coupled with the fact that established character actors taking roles in action movies are usually indicative of two things: a watertight script and a fresh director with vision.

Temper tantrums from leading man Bale aside, we have high hopes for *Terminator Salvation*. It's the movie that, until now, always existed vividly in your imagination – the gap filled story of John Connor's pivotal role in the war against the machines. In many ways, as result of the *Terminator*'s wacked out timeline, *Salvation* is a movie that is three parts sequel, one part prequel. It looks set to be a strange mish mash of a story that we can't wait to watch.



THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

On paper Jerry Bruckheimer's latest flick in development *Prince of Persia* just might be the best video game to movie adaptation ever. Amazingly, they've managed to attach a director of quality to the project (Mike Newell of *Donnie Brasco* and *Four Weddings and a*

Funeral fame) and a cast featuring thespian heavyweights such as Ben Kingsley and Alfred Molina.

The first clips of the movie were recently shown and we were more than pleasantly surprised at the quality. Hilarity at what initially

seemed to be a hideously miscast Prince in Jake Gyllenhaal has subsided – after cranking on pounds of muscle for the role he actually looks the part. Former Bond girl Gemma Arterton (the ginger one from *Quantum of Solace*) doesn't look half bad either.

ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen (Rating TBC)

Director: Michael Bay
Cast: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox

Recent trailers for this splodge-fest showed Megan Fox bending over a motorcycle in such a ridiculously explicit fashion that it almost went beyond parody, beyond satire, and simply became the most utterly glorious thing we've ever laid our filthy peepers on.

Revenge of the Fallen looks set to provide more of that visual glory by the buttload. Explosions, big robot car duels – Shia LaBeouf running... always running.

Should be popcorn-tastic.

I Love You, Man (Rating TBC)

Director: Ivan Reitman
Cast: Paul Rudd, Jason Segel

Is it truly possible to not like Paul Rudd? Finally the sidekick king gets top billing in this buddy comedy with a twist – he has no buddies. Then, when he finally finds one, crazy situational comedy ensues.

Jason Segel, of *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* fame, co-stars as Rudd's new buddy Sydney.

A top effort well worthy of a gander.

BLU-RAY

DIRECTOR: CLINT EASTWOOD | CAST: CLINT EASTWOOD, BEE VANG, AHNEY HER

GRAN TORINO (M)

Marking Clint Eastwood's triumphant return to a lead role for the first time in four years, *Gran Torino* sees one of his finest performances ever.

Walt Kowalski (Eastwood) is a retired



Polish-American Ford automobile assembly line worker and Korean War veteran. Soon after his wife passes away Kowalski's new young neighbour, Thao, tries to steal his prized 1972 Gran Torino. After a Hmong gang attacks Thao for failing, Kowalski sets out to reform his neighbour, who has no male role models in his life, and turn him into a man.

What follows is a powerful story of what it means to be a man, and how to go about becoming one. Kowalski is short-tempered, racist, and haunted by memories of war – but he's also a man of honour and tenacity. It's the latter qualities that make him the perfect father Thao never had.

Gran Torino was a critical success, and became Eastwood's most lucrative film, grossing over \$246 million worldwide. Still, it was ignored at the Oscars because Warner Bros. put all its support behind *The Dark Knight*, instead of sharing the love. Prove they missed out on a great opportunity and pick this up immediately.



EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:

Emotionally charged, challenging and, most of all, manly. Brilliant.

9



VAN HELSING (M)

Director: David Wain

Cast: Hugh Jackman, Kate Beckinsale, Richard Roxburgh, David Wenham

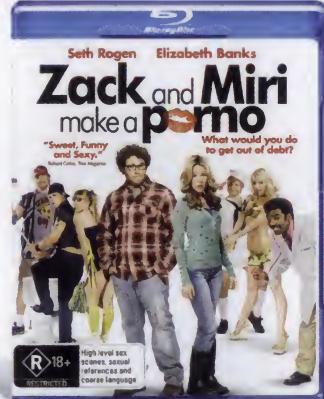
During the late 19th Century, famous monster hunter Dr. Gabriel Van Helsing heads to Eastern Europe to destroy Count Dracula, the Wolf Man and Frankenstein's Monster. Helping him in his quest is Anna Valerious.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:

Hardly set the world on fire the first time around

6



ZACK AND MIRI MAKE A PORN (R18+)

Director: Kevin Smith

Cast: Seth Rogen, Elizabeth Banks, Craig Robinson, Jason Mewes

Lifelong platonic friends Zack and Miri look to solve their respective cash flow problems by making an adult film together. Cue hijinks.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:

Hilarious, and surprisingly sweet. Recommended

8



TERMINATOR 2: SKYNET EDITION (M)

Director: James Cameron

Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Robert Patrick, Edward Furlong

THE defining sci-fi extravaganza for an entire generation, *T2* is often imitated, but never bettered. The *Skynet Edition* contains a glut of special features no true film fan should be without.

EXTRAS: 9

VERDICT:

One of the greatest action movies ever

10

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

UNFORGIVEN

An Oscar darling also directed by Clint Eastwood

DVD DIRECTOR: ERIC BANA | CAST: ERIC BANA, JAY LENO, JEREMY CLARKSON, DR. PHIL McGRAW



LOVE THE BEAST (M)

Word is Aussie film star Eric Bana could've made two films in the time he took to make this personal documentary, but we're really glad he didn't. *Love the Beast* is about Bana's own 25 year-long love story. A simple tale of one man's ongoing relationship with his very first car, his Ford GT Falcon Coupe. The Beast. After years of precious restoration, Eric and his three closest friends, decided to enter the car into one of the most gruelling and dangerous motor races that exists: The Targa Tasmania Rally. This would be a personal Everest for both man and machine, until... on day four of the race, tragedy struck. He crashed it, and he'd all but destroyed it. We follow Eric from candid moments inside his race car to the red carpet as he seeks guidance from the likes of Jay Leno, Jeremy Clarkson, and Dr. Phil. *Love the Beast* is a wonderfully unique love story between a man and a car – but nothing about the

film is odd or self-indulgent. You really do begin to understand just how important a car can be to a man – not just because of sentimental attachment, but because of what it represents. You don't have to like cars to enjoy this fascinating film.

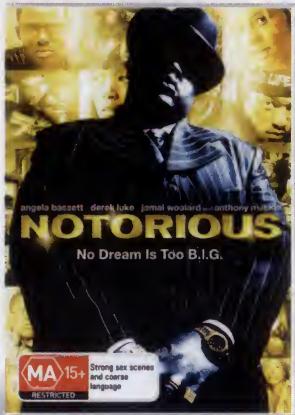
EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT: Unique and immensely enjoyable

9

TBC **YET TO BE CLASSIFIED**





NOTORIOUS

(MA15+)

Director: George Tillman, Jr.
Cast: Jamal Woolard, Derek Luke, Anthony Mackie, Angela Bassett

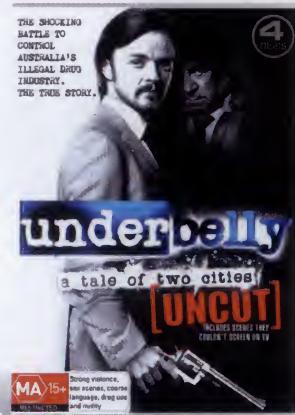
Notorious is a biopic film about the life and death of iconic hip hop star Christopher Wallace aka Biggie Smalls aka The Notorious B.I.G. It's not bad, although we'd probably recommend tracking down Nick Broomfield's 2002 doco *Biggie And Tupac* instead.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:

Standard biopic stuff, but great for Biggie fans

6



UNDERBELLY A TALE OF TWO CITIES

(MA15+)

Director: Various
Cast: Matthew Newton, Peter O'Brien

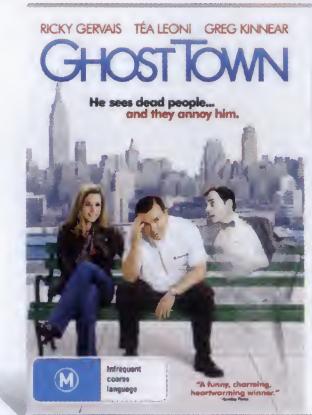
A generation before the Melbourne Gangland Wars, an even bigger crime wave rocked Australia. This is the story of a new breed of hard men.

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:

Quite a step down from the first series

6



GHOST TOWN (M)

Director: David Koepp

Cast: Ricky Gervais, Tea Leoni, Greg Kinnear, Aasif Mandvi, Alan Ruck, Dana Ivey, Bill Campbell

When Bertram Pincus dies unexpectedly, but is miraculously revived after seven minutes, he wakes up to discover that he now has the annoying ability to see ghosts. Even worse, they all want something.

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:

Funnier than you'd expect thanks to Gervais

8



IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Top Gear

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CHEATERS ALWAYS PROSPER!

ORIGIN FAR CRY 2 THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL MADWORLD SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT
BEN 10: PROTECTOR OF EARTH FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: ECHOES OF TIME THE POKEMON PLATINUM
SILENT HILL: HOMECOMING TOM CLANCY'S HAWX WWE LEGENDS OF WRESTLEMANIA DESTROY ALL HUMANS! PATH OF THE FURON
EVIL 4: WII EDITION SIM ANIMALS TENCHU: SHADOW ASSASSINS STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS - LIGHTSABER DUELS RACE PRO
CONQUEST 50 CENT: BLOOD ON THE SAND EAT LEAD: THE RETURN OF THE MATT HAZARD AND LOADS MORE FOR PS3, XBOX 360, WII, DS, PSP, PC

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

Download this...

COD: WaW map pack 2



Considering how nuts the first one was, this should be just as rad with three more multiplayer and one zombie map.

PURE - trophy support



More than 30 trophies are now supported by this ace off-road title. Why haven't you played it yet?

HAWX US Eagles DLC



Ditch the Wild Weasel and strap yourself in for five more birds of prey, including the blacker than black Blackbird.

Zen Pinball demo



One table's available to play in this glossy, authentic pinball sim. All that's missing are the cabinet cigarette burns and sticky buttons.

Tekken 6 trailer



A minute or so of old favourites and new faces smashing each other about, showing off the new destructible environments. Probably best to pack a bib.

NEWS

VIDZONE

Music videos on your PS3

Vidzone is a new free service is soon to be available where you can stream and cue up your favourite music videos, and it's coming out in Australia before anywhere else in the world. Download the Vidzone software from the PSN, and then the program can be accessed from the 'Music' icon on the XMB. After that, it's a matter of finding your favourite artist, making a playlist and then sitting back and basking in the admiration of friends and family at your music-picking skills. Plus, if you really can't wait to get home and turn on the PS3, your PSP can access the service on the go to pre-load the videos.



OUTRUN ONLINE ARCADE

It's somewhat surprising that, at its core, *OutRun* isn't a racing game. Yes, it has fancy cars – 10 Ferraris, all glossy and beautifully reflective – and yeah, you do burl down coastal roads, through rainforests and casino towns. Sure, you brake, turn and drift, but the rules of play and linearity mean this is stripped down to gameplay basics. What *OutRun* is, then, is the racing equivalent of *Sonic the Hedgehog 2*'s Green Hills Zone: the aim is to reach a goal and travel as fast as you can in one direction without stopping, whilst memorising the environment and avoiding opponents through repeat plays. Instead of being a lightning-quick spiny mammal you're a prancing horse wrapped in steel.

This PSN version shares similarities to the PS2 and PSP title, *OutRun 2006 Coast2Coast*, but cuts out a few

selectable cars and the entire original *OutRun 2* track set; plus there's naught to unlock. Once you're over the initial disappointment your focus shifts towards picking your favourite motor, throwing it sideways at 200-odd clicks and scoring higher and higher on the leaderboards. *Outrun*, Time Attack and Heart Attack modes are all represented, as is six-player multi, packaged in lush graphics and bright, bold presentation. *OutRun* is an arcade game in both name and form, and any hesitation you've had for not downloading it should be quashed now.

VERDICT

A pearly of an arcade classic, perfect for dipping in and out of.

8



ONLINE REVIEWS

KILLZONE 2: STEEL & TITANIUM NEW MAP PACKS

Killzone 2 possesses a great single player campaign, but it's in the multiplayer mode that the game shines so very, very brightly. These two new maps have us gibbering with glee.



WASTELAND BULLET

In a seemingly endless tunnel two trains race side-by-side. Not the best setting for a multiplayer map? Pig's arse! WB ends up being one of the most dynamic and exciting maps in the game. This time we have the addition of environmental hazards. Stay too high on the train and you'll get your head knocked off by metal girders. You can jump between the trains but just make sure to do it after the hefty pillars whoosh past. There are some genius spots for snipers and turrets, plus mounted guns can do big time damage due to the confined nature of the trains.

VEKTA CRUISER

This map is another winner, although that may be less apparent on your first few plays. Set on one of those floaty things Sev and crew launch off at the start of the game, this damaged platform has loads of colour, including a bright purple/blue core and much more verticality than we've come to expect from KZ2. Building turrets, wielding the shotgun and watching what's above and below you are recommended strategies. One niggle is the fact you can't call in air support but that aside this is a very tidy level that gets and better better the more you play it.

TRASH PANIC

What happens when you try to dispose of old Spice Girls CDs.



Riffing heavily on *Tetris* comes this puzzler with an ecological bent. An eco game had to happen at some point, and this one's focussed on compacting trash as efficiently as possible, replete with festering bin juice. While the premise sounds like a game with more heart than gameplay, in practice it demands creative thinking and decent reflexes; plus, it's murderously hard.

Various items are presented for destruction via a carousel and must be thrown and broken down inside a huge rubbish bin. At the start it's small items like a baseball bat, old speakers or a microwave oven, but as the stages progress expect to see a fire extinguisher, safe, and a children's slide. Of course, tossing something like a safe on top of speakers will disintegrate them in a second, but then how do you get rid of a monstrous

metal chamber? Blow it up. Matches and other combustible material are available at random to clear out your bin, plus it must be shaken via wagging the SIXAXIS to make the garbage settle and eliminate any space-sapping gaps, as it rarely falls neatly into place. Penalties are imposed for destroying certain objects, highlighted on screen, while you're rewarded with a sharp or heavy object for retrieving them safely. Tied together with a slick physics package and serviceable graphics, puzzle fiends will get a kick out of this. Everyone else should be prepared to clench teeth.

VERDICT

Maddening at times this rock-hard puzzler demands a ton of practice to reach perfection

7

INCOMING



We were teased with leaks, a cryptic website – tu4ar.com – and rife speculation, but we're excited that *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* is finally, finally getting a HD re-release. The concept is straightforward though epic in execution: 56 characters from the Marvel and Capcom worlds jump in for a three-on-three biff fest, but the manner in which it does this is nothing short of glorious bedlam. *MvC2* eschews the more subdued mechanics of *SSFII HD Remix*, and promotes huge air, massive combos and all-in team supers with an alterable team-support system. It's bold, bright and really fruity, from the character selection and their moves to the music and boisterous voice-over guy. We've played a local two-player match of this with the pick of a full 56-character roster – Ryu, Iron Man and Wolverine, if you were wondering, however we are partial to Jill Valentine – though the online versus will be where *MvC2* will shine. Standard PS3 controllers work a treat as the game's mechanics call for only light and heavy attacks – a double light gives a medium attack – with team support built in to the shoulder buttons. If Cappers can implement a solid online matching system, you, and we should be sold.



10 THINGS TO DO IN...

RED FACTION:
GUERRILLA

It'd be a crime to miss out on this game so to further understand why you should, nay, MUST have it – check out the list



1 JETPACK ALONG AND LAY THE HAMMER DOWN!

Although you don't get the jetpack until relatively late in the game (although it's a multiplayer staple) it soon becomes a favoured mode of transport. In fact, we haven't had this much fun with a jetpack since *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* – even though there probably hasn't been many since then anyway. It's actually a little hard to describe the sense of satisfaction you get out of dropping down hard on an EDF building and slamming the living crap out of everyone with just your hammer. We'll try. It's... double plus good. There.



2 BOOM WITH A VIEW

Sometimes you want to get a gander at your great works. And by great works we mean shit you've blown up. Instead of blowing your load straight away, wait until you've got some distance and then detonate your well-placed explosives. For some reason this never gets old. Really, it's awesome.



3 SHIT WHERE YOU EAT

To completely contradict the previous point it can also be fun to stand in the middle of your latest demolition, letting the bricks fall where they may. Chances are you'll be crushed but every now and then you'll walk out, nary a spot of damage on you. Try blowing a hole in the ceiling above you to escape harm.



4 CUT SICK WITH THE ROCKET LAUNCHER

This depends on which weapon you've upgraded the most. So make sure your rocket launcher is a sturdy weapon with a decent ammo count and fire rockets like a mad Martian rocket... erm, firer. This is especially gratifying if you get a smokestack or two into the mix. They blow up reeeeal purdy, like.



5 GTA: MARS

Jack a sweet ride and become the hoon from Mars. This is even more fun when you nab an EDF vehicle, especially when it has a mounted gun. "Stop!" they say. Sure, we'll stop... and then shoot you until you're a twitching pile of meat! [evil laugh] Oh, yes, we're dangerously insane!



Stop. Hammertime

6 TAKE ON A MISSION AND ONLY USE A HAMMER

This is for the masochist in us all. Take on a hard mission – one that you'd normally bring all your weapons to – and only use the hammer. Now, this will likely take several attempts to get right but once you've done it you'll feel like a God! Of course, immediately heading out and telling your mates you spent 11 hours to achieve such a pointless goal may bring you back to Earth... so don't tell them. It'll be our little secret. Go on, then.

7 SHOCKER

Arc welder, so useless when you first get it – so awesome when you power it up and make it smart (that is, when it doesn't electrify friendlies). Yes, you can wield this kind of power in other games but, *inFamous* aside, this has some of the best electricity-based graphics we've seen. And we've seen a bloody boat-load. Zap away people.

8 MECCHY GOODNESS

There are mechs that can float in the air, mechs that can shoot rockets but the mech that punches through buildings is where we place our love. Yes, you do get it in the demo from the PSN but in the game proper there's a lot more to crush. Swatting soldiers aside with a big metal fist... it fair brings a tear to the eye.

▼ Robots. They rule (or they will, anyway)



▼ He's so buzzed to finally meet you



9 PLOUGH YOUR VEHICLE INTO SOMETHING

Grab a hefty, but fast, vehicle, set your sights on a building that's either under a cliff or at the bottom of a steep incline... and you ride that mother-humper down. Occasionally the results are a bit crap – if you are knocked aside before you hit it – but mostly it'll be a giggle-worthy carnage caper. Hard and fast, that's the key here.



▼ Just one way to get blown



10 BIRD IS THE WORD!

Everybody knows that the bird is the word. Sorry, saw that *Family Guy* episode again. The ostrich hammer – April Fools joke cum multiplayer phenomenon. Hard to get, but easy to love. Who could have predicted such an odd weapon could do so much damage. Plus, it's a real hoot to kill somebody with a very large bird. Anyone who thinks it couldn't be welcome to get an ostrich, go to Mars and see if it works. If it doesn't we'll give you a key ring or something. Emus don't count.  **Anthony O'Connor**

WANTED

My precious...



ALPHA PROTOCOL

A conspiracy is afoot, as CIA agent Michael Thornton is cut off and turned into the hunted by the US government after a bungled mission. Ingrates! Uncovering those behind the conspiracy is the plan, in this third-person RPG actionfest that promises mucho weapons and spy gadgets to play with.



GRÜTAL LEGEND

Are you ready to rock? We said, ARE YOU... ahhh, sorry. Cast asunder after the Actizard merge, EA are saving the day with the adventures of a roadio who's sent to save the world from within a trippy heavy metal fantasy land. With all this, an umlaut and Jack Black's voice, we're ready.



DARKSIDERS: WRATH OF WAR

THQ are preparing to go all biblical on our butts, with this action-infused role player that takes its inspiration from the Book of Revelation. The player is War, one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, on a mission to find out just exactly which idiot prematurely done went and ended the world.



KATAMARI FOREVER

Yeah! The Prince returns to roll up a whole mess of crap and return order to the cosmos, in this continuation of the tripped-out series that's promising the most levels, tunes, visual styles, cousins, co-op and pretty much everything ever. All this and in 1080p as well – MMMmm... ballsy!



RATCHET & CLANK: A CRACK IN TIME

Finalising the *R&C Future* PS3 trilogy, this one's promising to go all Darwinian on us, with the origins of Ratchet and Clank's individual species' uncovered, as Ratchet battles to rescue his robo-buddy from the clutches of baastrally 'n' daastardly Dr Nefarious. We cannae wait!



SECTION 8

Alex Corde is Section 8's soldier of the future, in this strategic FPS named after the US Army's tag for discharging soldiers on grounds of insanity. Alex and cronies take on assignments others fear, all in the name of bringing down interstellar nasties ARM. Apparently.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTA/IV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

10



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: Visceral Games
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1

9



ASSASSIN'S CREED

"*Assassin's Creed* is a masterpiece, plain and simple. This game wouldn't be better if Jesus Christ himself designed it. After *Assassin's Creed*, the world of videogaming seems like a different place."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

10



RESIDENT EVIL 5

"A grand, bloody, epic adventure. Loads of imaginative, beautifully-designed monsters, huge boss fights and action a-plenty. The controls are still archaic and the puzzles are rubbish, but it totally entertains."

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. Probably the best game available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely the best exclusive. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

"Worth your sweat. The combination of two campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. A must for those wanting something moody and fresh."

DEVELOPER: Starbreeze Studios PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-12

8

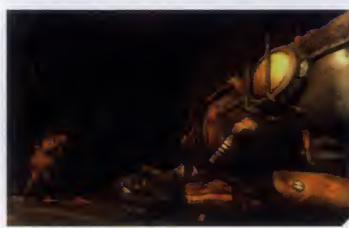


KILLZONE 2

"Visually Killzone 2 runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. Killzone 2 is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, BioShock is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. COD4 is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, Warhawk is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-32

9

THE ORANGE BOX

"The Orange Box is ripe, in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime Portal, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

9

BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

"Momentarily plugging the huge gap left by Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, Hell's Highway works by ploughing new ground as a shooter. Well-balanced squad mechanics are combined with real intensity and emotion."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

"Taking destructability to a new insanely high level, Bad Company is a title unafraid to push new ground. With some excellent characterisation, and some of the best multiplayer in the business, it's easily the best Battlefield title on console to date."

DEVELOPER: DICE PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

7



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstretching itself, Far Cry 2's breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8

TOP 5

FORTHCOMING NUMBER TWOS



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

Take two of total and utter destruction with funky vehicles and more weaponry than you could shake a Talibar at? Damn right we'll buy that for a dollar – or 90 or so.



BIOSHOCK 2

Altogether now, "Under the sea, it's better down where it's wetter" etc... Double entendre Disney lyrics aside, more BioShock + on time + rogue Big Daddy + naughty Big Sister = ace!



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

The days can't go quickly enough as we wait for the return of Nathan Drake, which promises added reality in both the AI and "Ooh look, that's purdy!" departments.



MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 2

With almost every Marvel character you can think of – and likely more – the plot may sound similar to Pixar's *The Incredibles*, but this is Marvel, so we're hoping for yayness.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

This classic beat 'em up is going next-gen via the PSN, promising the biggest fighter roster yet in a Capcom game – 56, unlocked from the get-go. Sweeeeeet!

INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS

PlayStation 2

Dog's Life



GAME: Dog's Life
CONSOLE: PS2
YEAR: 2003

THE MOMENT:

You're a dog!
Yeah, well you're no bloody oil painting yourself... oh yeah, we're talking about the game. You actually are a dog in it. Just the usual defences kicking in back there, sorry 'bout that.

Sure, it ain't hardcore - Kratos can sleep safe for another night - but *Dog's Life* certainly has a touch of originality to it, even if on the surface it's pretty much *Spyro the Dragon* with a doodo-doing canine instead of a fire-breathing mythical winged beastie. Rather than just taking the reins of the lead character though, in this case Jake the dog, you become the character. His thoughts are heard, and if you feel like taking a whiz or pinching a loaf at any time, you can. It stops short of testicular tonguing, but hey, you can't have everything, right?

Also, *Dog's Life* is an ace title for kids, which brings us to the point of this exercise, the venerable 'Magic Moment'.

Charged with looking after a young nephew, we were faced with a challenge. Finding entertainment distracting enough to save our collection of funky hyper-breakable stuff from being sticky-pawed to death, whilst not sending us into a *Petz* (or any similar such softbleah) induced stupor.

Enter *Dog's Life* through a metaphorical doggy-door. Whilst we would rate the Dalek-impersonating parrot quite loftily, what scores as the highlight for us is a simple pleasure which had one nephew laughing so hard we were praising the great god Scotchgard. Now, we've established the tendency towards excremental humour with this one, but when the Grandpa character let rip a ferocious fart (rather appropriately in a cutscene), then did the royal wave at it, we did a double take. When he cut another soon after, that was it, the youngster was GORN! We're not ashamed to admit it, we were too.

Ah, toilet humour; is there anything it can't do?



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock PUBLISHER: Funtastic PLAYERS: 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly impenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



RACE DRIVER: GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of *V8 Supercars* and *Colin McRae: DIRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"*Ferrari Challenge* will surprise you by being that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until *Gran Turismo 5* arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 - and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 09

"With it's new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9

10

10



STREET FIGHTER IV

"Capcom has been in the virtual brawling business longer than anyone, and with its vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay, SFIV is worth paying double for. Aquire on sight."

DEVELOPER: Capcom PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2

10



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

7



MADDEN NFL 09

"Despite being in the doldrums for the past couple of years, this year's *Madden* does a good job of scrambling back out. In terms of presentation this is a big leap from last year's effort, which struggled on the PS3."

DEVELOPER: EA Tiburon
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8



GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

"It's a tough call – GHWT blitzes *Rock Band* in terms of equipment, but struggles to match up to its sublime functionality. Still, it's an unmissable multiplayer experience."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
PUBLISHER: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



SINGSTAR

"Take *SingStar* for what it is: a sublimely developed party game that cruelly exploits drunken girls and deludes them into believing they are 'SingStars'. Perfectly presented, and endlessly fun post-booze-fest."

DEVELOPER: Sony
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

"Featuring a dual analogue control system (that paved the way for the sublime *SKATE*) *Fight Night Round 3* is perhaps one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. Bone-crunching."

DEVELOPER: EA Chicago
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

8



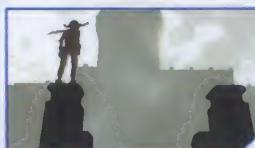
TOP 5

PS2 GAMES AS ART



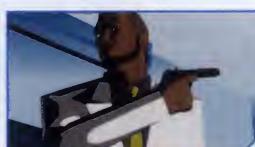
GOD OF WAR

Boasting everything an epic in any age should have – story, challenge, mood, looks and a touch of excess – this remains a games highlight not only for PS2, but forever.



ICO

Some schools of thought decree that art must trigger emotions in those who drink it in. To not become emotionally involved in *Ico* is to admit that you have a concrete heart.



KILLER 7

One of, if not the, best examples of cel-shaded graphics in a game, *Killer 7* is brash, brutal and anything but beautiful in story, but stunning for the ocular senses.



OKAMI

Unique visuals lead to a world of utter enchantment that, shock horror, also involves a sensationally formed game as well. No gamer should pass without experiencing *Okami*.



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Redefining the word 'compulsion', *SotC* combines the divine and calmly beautiful with moments of abject ARGHness, leading to an emotional crescendo that had us in tears.

INFAMOUS

It also dries hair



2000

TERRACON

A Xed and two naughts

Something strange happens towards the end of a video game console's commercial life: programmers start to unlock the true potential of the hardware. Run a PS2 game from 2008 side by side with one from 2001, and the difference is stark — and the better the coders, the more juice they can squeeze out.

So while the PSOne console may have been rocketing towards the grave in 2000, its games were soaring to new heights of excellence, both technical and artistic. In their own ways, both *Wipeout 3* and *Vib Ribbon* were modern art masterpieces. Yet one of the more striking games of this millennial era received little attention, a Sony exclusive called *Terracon*.

Its graphics shouldn't have been possible. Keep in mind that the PSX era was the era of volumetric fogging. Faced with pitiful draw distances, coders resorted to crude trickery to hide them — hence the 'Kryptonite Fog' in *Superman 64*. But there was no Fog in *Terracon*. Just vast, outdoor environs; surreal alien landscapes that begged the imagination.

Yes, *Terracon* was a trip. Backed by mellow trance tracks fresh from the beaches of Goa, this third-person action title put you in the space boots of Xed, a little green man roaming through verdant fields peppered with standing stones and killer robots. Doubtless this was many a raver's vivid nightmare.

Terracon was nothing like Crypto's retro romps. You hunted not DNA, but 'Genergy', a multi-purpose glowing energy robbed from defeated enemies, and pumped into glowing wire-frames to build structures. In purging each of the 32 levels spread across five worlds, one incrementally defeated the rogue terraforming AI bent on destroying all intelligent life. The premise, if not the implementation, was reminiscent of Bill Williams's Amiga classic *Pioneer Plague*.

It was ahead of the curve in a lot of ways. The designers thought enough of the in-game engine to use it for the cut scenes, an innovation that's now standard practice. The between-mission menus were built on the same technology, allowing you to visualise your next

conquest as you drifted high above a slowly rotating, radiant planetary surface.

Yet all this excellence was not rewarded. There was no sequel, and the developer, PictureHouse, has been forgotten by history. Sans catch-phrases or sex appeal, it's difficult to imagine any parallel universe where *Terracon* was a hit. It's not fair, but those are the facts. Sometimes even the best ideas cannot escape extinction. **James Cottee**

THE ENGINE DIFFERENCE

The secret behind *Terracon*'s ground-breaking graphics was E-Scape, a custom engine that as far as we know was only used in this one game. Running at a rock-solid 30 frames per second in the PSOne's high resolution mode, it scaled back the textures of distant objects to help cram them all in. These worlds were as big as any seen on the system to date, packed to the gills with ancient monuments and marauding spider robots. Textures were still warped by that wobbly zig-zag effect that tainted a lot of PSOne games, however.



Freeze, or I throw this in your bath!"



DETAILS

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: PICTUREHOUSE
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: UK
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$15-\$40 (EBAY)





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PA79376 - HOME ALONE & RANDY	PA77326 - OFFICE STRIP
PA77521 - MISS UK STRIP	PA80443 - 3 MIN STRIP
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Gran Turismo 5
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the scenes at
Sydney's
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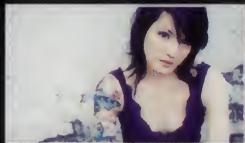


Motoring Along

Motörhead's Lemmy –
inked and fuelled

The Femme Fatale Issue

Pink talks tattoos, Tru Love with Carey Hart
and gives a warning to Kat Von D



Ink Life: My First Ink



Ink People: Tom Gabel



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The notorious Queen of
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